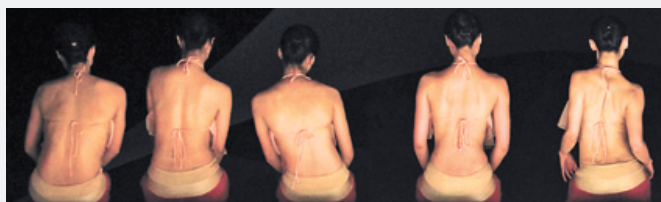
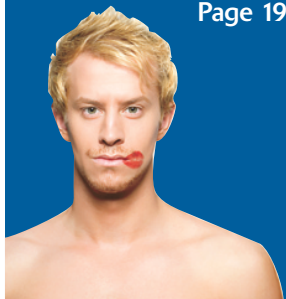


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you're kissing
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Ancient love on stage

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past restored

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Ending a year of change

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For China, this has been an unusual year. From earthquakes and food scares to riots and the Beijing Olympics, the country has changed. But disasters aside, the year and its events were shaped by people, not forces of nature.

For this final 2008 issue, Beijing Today looks back at the news that mattered to you and at the people who helped shape and record it.

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get its own
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Disabled
accessible taxis
disappear



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AMERICAN COLLEGE "HOLIDAY" BOWLS LIVE! AND REPLAYS!

City plans 'Chinese Broadway' in Haidian

By Jin Zhu

A national rehearsal center will be built at the end of next year in Haidian District, the Haidian District Government said on December 20.

The surrounding project consists of 32 theaters, including a main theater with 2,000 seats and auxiliary theaters that can seat 300 to 500 people. It will be completed within five years.

The site will be "a Chinese Broadway base for composers, writers, performers and actors in training," Xinhua reported, quoting a spokesman.

"We are trying to integrate plays, mar-

keting, promotion and theaters to benefit both the domestic and overseas market, just as Broadway has done," Cheng Jixin, the chairman of the company, said.

"However, learning from Broadway is not the same as copying indiscriminately. We aim to strengthen cooperation with other domestic theaters and promote more low-cost Chinese productions. Setting up an operation model suitable for Chinese theater would be a permanent solution for self-development," he said.

Beijing Shibo, one of the two developers, said there are plans to stage 100 musicals, including Western productions like

Aida and The Lion King.

The company also plans to stage Chinese originals in European and American theaters.

Last Saturday Beijing Oriental Broadway International Theatre, another developer, announced it will take charge of the complex's operations once it opens.

The main construction, including the Broadway Flagship Theatre, is expected to be complete within three years. Other facilities around the new theaters, including hotels, office buildings and clubs, will be constructed in tandem. The whole project will be complete in 2013.



If a dog bites a person, new roles would make the owner liable. CFP Photo

Knotted gun park's symbol of non-violence



Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, a Swedish artist, presents his piece "The Knotted Gun," a statement about non-violence, in Chaoyang Park on December 19.

The piece was the first of the sculptor's works in Asia. The original was placed in front of the UN headquarters in New York City. Since then 15 duplicates have been settled in cities throughout Europe and South America.

The sculpture, a gun tied in a knot, expresses the artist's anger about random violence following the murder of a close friend in 1980.

(By Jin Zhu) CFP Photo

'Feelings' TV shows face cancellation

By Venus Lee

The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) ordered all local TV stations to modify their more emotional programming to prevent "vulgarization."

This is the second time SARFT censored such programming after shutting down Shenzhen TV's Super Emotion (Chaoji Qinggan Duidui) last year.

Spiritual Garden (Xinlin Huayuan) and Together Till Daybreak (Xiangban Daoliming), two such shows on Shanghai TV, were shut down after the order. Feelings Equa-

tion (Qinggan Fangchengshi) on Beijing TV (BTV) was also canceled, though directors said the cancellation was not related to SARFT.

BTV said it will remove any program found to broadcast false stories. "Our rule is to respect the truth completely. Persons and stories in any program must be absolutely authentic," a BTV spokesman said.

Feelings TV shows have been increasingly popular with viewers. The shows share an emotional story with the audience through a series of interviews. However many have fabricated plots to boost

ratings. Netizens reported many stories were drawn from Internet forums, and became deceptive or uncanny after a director's processing.

"As far as I know, it is a common problem for such programs. [The shows exaggerate] because all TV stations are in competition," said Li Hao, a psychologist and frequent consultant on such programs.

"Some stations even hire a professional playwright to adapt net novels and use actors or actresses rather than search for someone with an interesting or unique story to interview," he said.

Tort law to allow mental distress as damages

By Han Manman

The legislature may add mental distress to the list of damages that can be claimed under Tort Law according to legislation submitted on Monday.

The new draft of the Tort Law was tabled at the 11th National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee for a second reading.

"Existing laws don't stipulate provisions for mental distress, but there are already many cases in which such claims have been made," the vice chairman of the NPC Law Committee, Li Shishi, said.

In most cases, people experience both economic loss and mental distress when their civil rights are violated, so the latter should also be covered by law, Li said.

Yang Lixin, a law professor at Renmin University of China, said to include mental compensation in the Tort Law draft would rectify a "key defect" in the legal system.

"The law could be applied in compensation cases involving victims of the Sanlu baby formula melamine-adulteration scandal," said Yang, who helped draft the law.

This latest draft covers compensation for a wide range of cases, including harm from defective products, traffic accidents, medical accidents, job injury, pollution, Internet abuse and injuries caused by other people's pets.

Yang said a stipulation that allows medical staff to provide emergency medical treatment to critical patients without family authorization is very important.

Last November, a 22-year-old pregnant woman, Li Liyun, died of severe pneumonia because her husband Xiao Zhijun refused to sign papers that would have allowed a Beijing hospital to perform life-saving surgery as Xiao insisted till the last moment that his wife was suffering from nothing more than a simple cold.

According to the draft, if an object falling from a building injures people and it is difficult to find the culprit, all occupants of the building likely to have been responsible must share the payment of compensation.

If a dog bites a person, its owner must foot the victim's entire medical bill unless the owner can prove that person provoked the dog. Even if provoked, the owner could still end up paying the entire medical bill if the dog is unregistered.

The draft tort law was submitted to the national legislature for its first reading in 2002 as part of the draft civil law. The legislature decided to review it as a separate law due to its complexity.

Shaolin Temple markets kungfu tea amid criticism

By Huang Daohen

The Shaolin Temple, known in the West as the birthplace of kung fu, is under fire once again for releasing a new line of health drinks and building a new hospital.

Local authorities approved the first batch of the temple's tea treatment drinks, Shi Yanlin, head of the temple's medicine bureau, said. The drinks will be on retail shelves in spring.

Shi said the Shaolin drinks will be based on the temple's traditional Chinese herbal therapies, which use ingredients such as longan, perilla and dried ginger. "[The temple] has a long history and is famed for making medicine," he said. "The drinks are different from common energy ones and can benefit people's health."

The temple is seeking to partner with potential producers, but Shi denied a report that it would cooperate with Pepsi.

For the hospital plan, Shi told the *Henan Business Newspaper* that it identified a hospital site and reached preliminary agreement with local villagers on land acquisition.

"We are waiting for government approval, but the hospital will open in 2010 if all goes smoothly," he said.

An outpatient building will be a featured design in the facility. The center of the hospital would be a meditation room, in which treatment would be based on a Buddhist regimen, the newspaper reported. However, modern medicine would not be excluded.

Led by Abbot Shi Yongxin, the temple's "CEO monk," the 1,500-year-old temple has frequently found itself in the spotlight. It has embarked on a number of commercial ventures following some headline-grabbing events, such as a "trustee" system to run



The Shaolin Temple's medicinal clinic opens to the public. CFP Photo

four 2,000-year-old temples in Yunnan Province, a Super Girl-style kungfu competition and an overseas branch.

The moves sparked criticism nationwide from media reports to Internet postings over the temple's excessive business involvement.

Traditionally, kungfu masters pass down their skills to select apprentices based on their virtues rather than their economic conditions, Simon Zhang, a government employee, said.

"Today the temple has degraded to a company," Zhang said.

Happy Valley celebrates the holidays till Jan 3



Happy Valley, a theme park on East Fourth Ring, is open from Christmas Eve until January 3. Tickets cost 120 yuan for day or 60 yuan for a night. CFP Photo

'Illegal taxes' chase investor back to Singapore

By Zhang Dongya

A Chinese Singaporean Wang Quancheng sought the aid of the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) to resolve a tax dispute with a Fujian Province county government, whose local court refused to hear his case.

Wang, 42, born in Anxi County of Fujian, emigrated to Singapore in 1987 at age 21. Eight years ago, Wang invested in the five-star Anxi Mingyuan Hotel in his hometown. "It was the first top level hotel in Anxi," Wang said.

He made an agreement with the

county governor on the investment and construction, but the man was replaced during the hotel's construction. The former agreement failed under the new governor, and the county tax bureau levied a slew of taxes on Wang.

Among the taxes was a "prostitute tax," which the bureau defended by saying the hotel probably allowed prostitutes, as well as the "urban real estate tax." However, provincial regulations exempt new buildings from real estate tax for three years from the month construction is completed, Chen Yueqin, 39, Wang's

lawyer from Beijing Chenyueqin Law Firm, said.

After his suit was thrown out, he turned to the ICSID, which arbitrates international investment disputes, but it requires both parties to sign an arbitration agreement.

The county governor refused to sign the contract, and Wang is looking for a buyer for his hotel.

Wang said three other Chinese Singaporeans who invested in Anxi had been burned the same way and were forced to withdraw.

"There are many cases of illegal taxation, but few can win a

lawsuit. The taxes are an important source of county revenue, which makes the judges loathe to hear the case. There is still an extreme mindset of 'regional protectionism,' so foreign investment is guaranteed to run into trouble," Chen said.

Wang founded Huayuan Association, an organization for Chinese people in Singapore, in 2001. He dedicated himself to promoting investment in his hometown.

"There are still problems with local investment, and we will think twice before doing this again," Wang said.

NGO pledges to back 2009 entrepreneurs

By Jackie Zhang

The employment prospects for next year's graduates are lower than ever due to the increasing admissions and a global financial crisis. Youth Business China (YBC), an NGO that encourages and helps young people to start their own businesses, plans to increase the number of graduates it will support in 2009.

YBC was spun off Youth Business International (YBI), a UK-based NGO. Its Beijing office opened at the end of 2005.

"People thought only graduates who couldn't find a job would start their own business. But more and more young people are opening their minds. Most are willing to run their own business rather than work for a boss. But they lack experience and professional guidance. YBC gives them financial support and professional guidance," Yu Ping, executive director of the Beijing office, said.

YBC offers an interest-free 50,000-yuan loan and one-on-one professional guidance. "Young people submit their business plans in detail, and we invite entrepreneurs to look them over. The more detailed and practical the plan, the more likely we will back it. Young people are required to repay the loan within three years," Yu said.

Ha Yue runs a company to provide Chinese courses for foreigners in Beijing. In 2005, when she returned to China after graduating in Australia, she thought of opening the school. She and two of her friends went into business, but her friends quickly bailed. Ha went to YBC for help.

"The financial support is important, but more important for me is the advice and guidance YBC provided," Ha said.

Ding Ruiyong is another example. He worked for eight years in the logistics industry. "It was not what I really wanted to do," Ding said. He lives in a village in Tongzhou District, and his parents grow soybeans.

"I noticed that agriculture was supported by the government, and my experience in the village would help me start a farm. I submitted my farm plan to YBC early this year," he said. Ding was awarded a 50,000-yuan loan and Zhang Hengtao, vice president of Beijing Dafa Chia Tai, became his personal tutor.

"Zhang's company exports agricultural products. He gave me a lot of help," Ding said. Now, Ding grows three kinds of soy beans. "The farm will have to enlarge its business area, like processing bean products and planting beans of various kinds. But it will come in time," Zhang said.

In the three years since YBC opened in Beijing, dozens of people have received its support. "This year, 13 people were granted a loan. We aim to double the number in 2009," Yu said.

'Robin Hood' spirit, a pirate phenomenon or an innovation?

New policy from the government

Robin Hood mobile phone manufacturers have caused worry following a new Ministry of Industry and Information Technology policy. On December 18, the ministry said on its Web site that it plans to develop a management system to register the IMEI number of homemade mobile phones.

It also indicated that the Telecommunication Terminal Testing & Approval Forum, a semi-governmental organization, has already awarded IMEI numbers to 200 types of mobile phones in China.

An IMEI is the legally required identification number unique to each GSM or TD-SCDMA handset. The announcement may be a signal that the government is preparing to shut down Robin Hood phone makers.

But the phones found their niche in the lower class, where no-brand phones win out any day over Lenovo and Nokia's expensive offerings. In Pakistan, many Robin Hood phones imported from China are used by terrorists. Because hundreds of these phones use the same cracked IMEI number, it is hard for Pakistan's intelligence department to track down their users.

1,000 yuan for an iPhone clone

Shanzhai originally referred to those phones produced by a small mountain village of Guangdong Province. However, the term has expanded as a blanket for any product made with stolen intellectual property or branding.

"I don't want to talk about this issue, it has nothing to do with our business," said Yang, a sales manager for the company which makes the HiPhone, a clone of Apple's iPhone. He was asked about sales status since the government's announcement.

"It's not iPhone; it's better than iPhone," is the brand's slogan. Though most of these companies maintain well-designed Web sites, they shy away from media coverage as most involved in grey-area industries do.

The Shanzhai phone dates way back, but it has only in the last two years come to occupy a sizable chunk of China's phone market. This underground business has built a whole industry chain from design to after-sale service.

Native mobile phone manufacturers experienced a downturn in 2006 when the market was mostly controlled by foreign brands. But the technology offered by Taiwan semiconductor company MediaTek came in as their savior. Its MTK solution integrates the chipset and operating system of the whole product. By adopting MediaTek's technology, mobile phone manufacturers can save on research and development cost – the most expensive area of phone development.

But everything has two sides.

By Wang Yu

"Shanzhai," the Chinese word for "Robin Hood," is guaranteed a spot on the list of 2008's top words. The term first appeared in use by the underground mobile phone industry, and has since become a country and industry-wide phenomenon that has taken China by storm. While the topic is frequently debated, Robin Hood goods are not about right or wrong; they are about being practical.



It may be the first mobile phone on earth that is equipped with a lens.



The iPhone clones are far beyond the imagination of Steve Jobs.



'The Invincible Ugly Girl', the 'Robin Hood' TV drama of the year.

MTK's solution made it very easy to make a mobile phone. "In any market in Huaqiang, Shenzhen, you can find every part of a mobile phone waiting to be assembled into a product," Vincent Wen, a network engineer, said.

The MTK system has been re-developed by the Robin Hood manufacturers to meet the users' requirement. Recently, a new imitation of the iPhone was released. This CiPhone has a new screen lock function using software installed on the handset.

"I think there are three key points to the success of Robin Hood phones. First they are so

cheap. Second the nice appearance attracts customers. At last, the variety of functions is a clear selling point. One Robin Hood phone has an integrated bank note validator," Andy Yu, a writer of the IT blog Engadget.com, said.

Besides the pure copiers

Lao Bi started shanzhai.cn one year ago; the Web site has since become the authority on Robin Hood products.

"My idea was to collect information from these small manufacturers," Lao Bi said. With the help of his friends who work in the phone industry, the Web site soon

attracted some manufacturers who want to cooperate with Lao Bi.

"We usually contact by short messaging and they will arrange a place to give me a prototype to write test reports for the site. The Robin Hood phone makers never show me their factories. They want to remain underground," Lao Bi said.

The makers are divided into different strata. Some want to make money quick, so the cheap MTK solution fits the bill. "But once, a company told me its imitation iPhone would help it break into the industry. They wanted to develop their own brand and technology using the money from the clone sales," Lao Bi said.

Some Robin Hood manufacturers focus on Google's Android system. It delivers a complete set of software for mobile devices: an operating system, middleware and key mobile applications. As Android's Open Handset Alliance is attracting members like Sony Ericsson, LG and Samsung, it presents another good opportunity for small Chinese manufacturers.

An alternative creativity

Liu Kai, a doctoral student at Peking University, bought his Robin Hood phone for 850 yuan. "It is non-branded but has almost every function a mobile phone can have. You can even play games on it," Liu said.

Not only nameless small manufacturers are making clones. The M8, the first mobile phone by AV device manufacturer Meizu, has been a hot topic for industry insiders and consumers.

M8 was at first shot down as another iPhone imitator. Meizu didn't adopt the MTK solution but began to develop its own operation system based on Windows CE, a version of Microsoft's operating system used to power devices. The new technology helped the M8 find recognition as a reputable domestic phone.

"The core technology of M8 is the software. We are trying our best to optimize the operat-

ing system," Meizu's CEO Huangzhang posted on the company's Web site.

"Unlike the manufacturer of other iPhone clones, Meizu competes with more powerful rivals. Sticking to creative ideas has been a big payoff for our customers," Lao Bi, of Shanzhaiji.cn, said.

But most Robin Hood products cannot shake their problems of IP infringement and poor quality.

"These Robin Hood products are stepping on the iPhone for their own ends. They are mass produced to appeal to the poorer consumers who admire high end products. That is the key to their success rather than their sporadic creativity," a blogger at design blog Hi-ID wrote.

China's car industry was a participant in the Robin Hood phenomenon long before phone manufacturers. Native brands such as BYD and Shuanghuan all had a bad reputation as copiers of foreign brands. But with its research into cell-driven vehicles, BYD has attracted investment from even Warren Buffett. Its first electric car, the F3DM, has made it a technology leader even while its front end is ripped off the Toyota Corolla.

Besides the big products, China is seeing Robin Hood things everywhere, from the "KFG" fast food outlet to an Ugly Betty copier on television. But the Robin Hood gala which is taking on CCTV's New Year's show has grassroots backing.

"I think the Robin Hood phenomenon captures the creativity of the poorer class. The imitation manufacturers know the value of creativity and should not be looked down on," said He Yuxin, a senior editor of a weekly newspaper.

Robin Hood goods have existed every since China opened its doors in 1979. But only those who achieve a breakthrough in technology can survive their reputation as illegal copiers. "The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's new policy may end many of these manufacturers, but it offers others an opportunity to head down the right path," Lao Bi said.

"Regulations will strengthen China's mobile phone industry. They always follow in the footsteps of foreign companies. Now it is the time to innovate," Yu of Engadget.com, said.

China battles 'Mafia-style' gangs as economy slows down

(AFP) – The nation plans to set up a special police division to tackle organized crime and gang-related violence as the global economic crisis deepens social unrest, *China Daily* reported Monday.

"In the foreseeable future, gangs will remain active as the country undergoes dramatic social and economic changes," the newspaper quoted an unnamed public security ministry official as saying.

"Gang-related crimes have become a threat to our social stability and the economy," the official said. "They dare anything," he added, citing murder, rape, robbery, kid-

napping and assault.

He said the Ministry of Public Security plans to set up a special division to fight such crimes, including organized prostitution, gambling and drug trafficking.

Figures from the Supreme Court show that gang-related crime in 2007 was up 161 percent year-on-year, the news daily said.

Police will also keep a close eye on problems stemming from unemployment caused by the ongoing economic downturn, especially in export-oriented industries where workers are being laid off, it said.

Expert view

The fight against organized crime will be an ongoing task as the tremendous economic and social change that the country is going through breeds gang crimes, Liang Huaren, a professor of criminal law at the China University of Political Science and Law, said.

Nowadays, gangs are typically involved in organized prostitution, gambling, drug production and trafficking, Li said. The construction, transportation and mining sectors also attract gang crimes, he said.

"Gangs are becoming involved in more areas and industries. They often intervene in various

kinds of money disputes and conduct racketeering."

On December 5, three top gangsters received the death penalty in Yingkou, Liaoning Province, after they were convicted of more than 20 charges including organizing gang-related crimes, murder and illegal possession of firearms. Another 93 gangsters were given prison terms ranging from several years to life.

Figures from the Ministry of Public Security show that police have handled around 900 gang-related cases and locked up thousands of criminals since a crackdown was launched in 2006; and more than

70,000 crimes linked to gangs have been solved.

Li said the ministry should work more closely with the discipline supervision and prosecution departments to root out corrupt government officials who shelter gangsters.

"To evade police crackdowns, gangs often seek the protection of government officials by every possible means," Wang Wei, vice minister of supervision, said in an earlier interview. "We must be vigilant. If found to be true, there should be no mercy for those officials, especially government leaders," he said. (Agencies)

Japanese youth arrive for friendly visit



High school students with a Japanese youth delegation visited the National Stadium over the weekend. The 1,000-member delegation arrived last week, rounding off this "China-Japan Friendly Exchange Year of the Youth". Breaking into seven small groups, they will visit Ningbo, Hangzhou, Jinan and Qingdao in the east, Xi'an and Baoji in the west, Shenzhen and Guangzhou in the south and Dalian and Shenyang in the northeast.

Country says suspects should return if Guantanamo closes

(Reuters) – The country said Tuesday it wants 17 Muslim Chinese terror suspects returned if the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba is closed by President-elect Barack Obama.

Obama has pledged to close the prison at the US naval station in southeastern Cuba which has come to symbolize aggressive detention practices that opened the States to allegations of torture.

Warner Bros blacks out 'Dark Knight' from China

(Reuters) – The Warner Bros studio said on Wednesday it has canceled plans to release its blockbuster Batman movie *The Dark Knight* in China, citing "cultural sensitivities" surrounding the film.

The studio, a unit of Time Warner, did not specify what Chinese audiences or censors might find objectionable about the movie.

"Based on a number of pre-release conditions that are being attached to *The Dark Knight*, as well as cultural sensitivities to some elements of the film, we have opted to forego a theatrical release of the film in China," Warner Bros said in a statement.

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Foreign 'runners' will be hunted for fleeing debt

By Huang Daohen

Overseas investors who flee the country leaving behind debts and other liabilities will be tracked down and punished, the government said over the weekend.

Fugitive investors have caused domestic stakeholders heavy economic losses and hurt social stability, according to a paper issued by the ministries of Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Public Security.

The paper, titled "Cross-border Investigation and Litigation of Fugitive Foreign Investors," required related departments to seek foreign aid to investigate cases involving large sums of money and to request the extradition of fugitives.

Most fleeing investors were in small and labor-intensive companies supported by domestic ones, Wen Yi, a legal consultant with a multinational company, said.

The capital withdrawal

affected domestic partners, especially now when shrinking global demand is dealing a heavy blow to those companies, Wen said. "The withdrawal of foreign capital should go through the formalities of bankruptcy."

The government's move came at a time when there are increasing cases of foreign investors who slip away, leaving behind equipment, unpaid wages and debts.

Xinhua reported 87 companies funded by investors from the Republic of Korea (ROK), withdrew from Shandong Province without proper liquidation of assets last year.

In January, 10 ROK company leaders abandoned their Yantai Shigang Fiber Company in Shandong and fled because of financial difficulties. They left without paying the wages of more than 3,000 employees or paying off their substantial debts.

Related

Capital outflow could cause sell of US treasury bonds

The country's foreign exchange reserves fell to US \$1.9 trillion (12.9 trillion yuan), Cai Qiusheng, director of the External Debt Department of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, said this week.

Cai said that the foreign exchange reserve balance dipped under US \$1.89 trillion at the end of October. This was the first decrease since December 2003.

The foreign exchange reserve slide in October may be due to many factors, such as foreign capital withdrawal and yuan depreciation, Zhao Xiao, an economics professor at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said.

The country has long worried about foreign capital withdrawal, Zhao said. A sharp and continuous outflow will not only seriously affect the financial industry and real economy, but force the People's Bank of China to sell off foreign assets, such as US treasury bonds.

This would undoubtedly affect international financial markets, Zhao said.

Many countries, such as ROK, India and Russia, have seen a sharp decline in foreign exchange reserves during the present financial crisis and their central banks have been forced to cut their holdings.

"Perhaps now it is China's turn," Zhao said.

Samsung fined 50 mln yuan in patent case

South Korea's Samsung Electronics has been ordered to pay 50 million yuan to a Chinese company for infringing on its dual-mode cell phone patent, Xinhua news agency reported.

Samsung was sued by Holley Communications, a company based in Zhejiang Province, in April for violating a patented technology allowing cell phones to operate on both CDMA and GSM networks, Xinhua reported.

The Intermediate People's Court of Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang, made the ruling on Saturday. The fine was a record pay-out for China's cellphone industry, Xinhua said.

"Samsung has sold more than 700,000 cell phones that contain Holley's patented technologies. The patents are still on sale. The compensation is only part of the sale," the agency quoted Ge Chen, Holley's executive director, as saying.

(Agencies)

Bank of East Asia issues RMB credit card in China

By Jin Zhu

The bank of East Asia (EAB) launched its yuan-backed credit card on the mainland on Tuesday, the first overseas bank to offer a yuan credit card independently in China.

The launch marks the removal of a key restriction on foreign banks' retail business in the country.

The Hong Kong-based bank launched three types of yuan credit cards, all with similar qualifications to those offered by Chinese banks.

"Bank card business is the biggest competitive disadvantage for the overseas banks in China. The lack of the credit card business has long been troublesome for customers," Lin Zhiming, vice president of EAB's Chinese branch, said.

"We worked out a strategy to develop our credit card business, but it will be four or five years before we can make a profit," Lin said.

Several foreign banks, including HSBC, Citigroup and Standard Charter Bank, have also applied to issue credit cards on the Chinese mainland.

Cartier Lam, executive vice president of EAB, said the bank was the first to issue the cards because it was the first to complete its preparations: moving data centers that handle card transactions and related data into China.

According to the People's Bank of China, the central bank, there were 1.2 billion credit cards circulating on the mainland as of June. The country began circulating credit cards in 2002.

"Many believe the mainland still enjoys a growing economy. However, the key to the success of the bank card business will be determined by the bank's market share," said Jin Desheng, director of the credit card department at the Industrial and Commercial Bank's Tianjin branch.

"Consider China Merchant Bank: it only made profits on the mainland once it issued 20 million cards - a process that took six years. Overseas banks should prepare to lose money their first few years," Jin said.

KFC initiates price cut



By Zhang Dongya

Yesterday, the US fast-food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) cut the price of part of its products in some 1,400 stores in 31 cities. It will reduce prices by 20 percent at the most - the biggest drop since the chain came to China.

The cut will continue through February 3. KFC China said the discount is related to the economic crisis, and management considers it a good time to attract more customers to stimulate the domestic market.

Prices of gasoline, water and electricity rose this year, and with it the menu prices at foreign fast food chains like KFC and McDonald's.

IC Photo

Market watch

Sina gets bargain in Focus Media deal

Diluting shareholders to buy a slower-growing business does not often make sense, but the bid by Chinese Internet portal Sina for the outdoor-advertising assets of Focus Media Holdings could be an exception.

The distinction between the two companies could not be more stark. Sina's profits are growing at double-digit rates, while Focus Media's recent past has been marked by one fumble after another.

Sina's challenge is to prove that the problem with the newly acquired business - a network of television screens in building lobbies and elevators across China -

is a result of poor management, not a poor market.

Sina is offering Focus Media and its shareholders 47 million shares of its stock and about 46 percent of the combined company. Focus Media would retain a rump ad business.

Sina's shares fell 17 percent Monday. It is little surprise that shareholders are doubtful, particularly as they're being diluted out of nearly half the company. But what they are getting in return could pay long term dividends.

Where this deal holds the most potential is in its massive

expansion of Sina's base of advertisers. Focus Media, China's biggest outdoor advertiser, has a customer base that's three times as large as Sina's, Morgan Stanley analyst Richard Ji said.

These assets accounted for 52 percent of Focus Media's revenue, but 73 percent of gross profit in the first nine months of the year.

Sina should be able to cross-sell between the online and offline platforms, and to diversify out of a problematic concentration of advertisers in the finance, real estate and auto industries. Some are skeptical. Focus Media itself housed outdoor and online adver-

tising under one roof and failed to capitalize on it.

But these failures on Focus Media's part have created an opportunity for Sina. Focus Media has been under fire after missing third-quarter earnings targets when business was supposed to have boomed during the Beijing Olympics. Later, it took a \$200 million write-down on a business just one year after buying it. The company's market value has fallen by over 80 percent this year.

Sina needs to prove that what it has bought is a bargain - and not just cheap. (Agencies)

Wheelchair-accessible taxis face extinction

Contradictory positions

Li Yi, not the person's real name, who lives in Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District, takes his 10-year-old son to the Union Hospital for treatment every week. The father and son usually get a regular taxi, with the foldable wheelchair put in the back. But earlier this month, because of freezing temperatures, Li decided to call for a "wheelchair taxi," which has a wheelchair ramp.

On the phone, the driver asked Li for a 100-yuan rental fee, saying he lived too far away. Li immediately complained to the Beijing Disabled Person's Federation and the cab company. He eventually got a wheelchair-accessible taxi on his doorstep, at the same price as a regular one, but it was three hours too late for the hospital appointment.

Li's experience is not unique. Other handicapped people who visit the Union Hospital have encountered the same problem with wheelchair-accessible taxis.

The drivers have their own grievances. "Regular passengers do not want to take our taxis, so we often drive for miles empty. Sometimes the gasoline bill reaches 100 yuan, but we've only earned 10 yuan from one passenger. We cannot make ends meet," said a driver for the Beiqi Group, identified under the pseudonym Liu Yu.

Things were different during the Games. Three models of wheelchair-accessible cabs were introduced: Austin from the UK, Santana from Brazil and Quanshun, a local car brand. They were distributed to Shouqi Group and Beiqi Group, the biggest car rental companies in the city, with 35 taxis going to each one.

All operating costs of the 70 units, including gasoline bills, were shouldered by the car rental companies. Drivers handed the companies their daily earnings and were paid a monthly salary.

"Business was good during the Paralympics. I waited around the Paralympic Village every day and was busy driving around handicapped athletes," Liu said. "We also drove long distances with an empty car, but the gasoline was paid for by the company."

The good, bad and the ugly

For Jin Yi, 44, secretary-general of Dongcheng District's Sports Federation for the Disabled, wheelchair-accessible taxis are a "great" thing.

Jin, who uses a wheelchair, recalled an embarrassing moment in April when he failed to flag a cab. "It was my first time to call for a taxi on a wheelchair and none stopped. I previously used a walking stick and cabs would just allow me in. I knew a wheelchair would be a lot of trouble from that day onward," he said.

On the day wheelchair-accessible taxis hit the streets, Jin eagerly went for a ride on one. "It really helps wheelchair users, and more, it offers us dignity, which

By Zhang Dongya

To serve the Olympics and the Paralympics, a fleet of 70 wheelchair-accessible taxis were put in service May 18, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. But most of these cabs have stopped operating because of bad business and high gas prices. These taxis played a laudable role during the summer games, but their continued existence is in question.



The taxis that served the Games now face difficulties and dilemma in its operations.

CFP Photos



The taxis are equipped with special features, but regular passengers do not like taking them.



A rotating front seat makes getting on and off easier.



Shouqi Group and Beiqi Group, the capital's biggest car rental companies won the rights to operate the taxis.

is very important to handicapped people," Jin said.

But in the rush to have these cabs out in time for the summer games, some logistical matters were not considered. They were thrown into the market to compete with regular cabs in an uneven playing field.

The car rental companies began charging drivers of wheelchair-accessible taxis a rental fee that is about 700 yuan less than that of the regular drivers. The cabs were roomier and had the feel of a classic European automobile, but this also meant they gobbled up gasoline like monsters.

On top of this, regular passengers do not like taking them. "Some people have no idea the taxis were designed for the disabled. They think we're illegal taxis. Also, since the cabs lack a front passenger seat and too much space in the back, people aren't used to it," Liu said.

These public transport aim to serve the disabled community, but with few passengers to ferry, the drivers are losing money. The taxis are stuck in a difficult position.

Beiqi Group has taken some action like raising the driver's gas subsidy and reducing their rental fee. But drivers say this is only a stop-gap solution; it does not go into the heart of the problem.

Nowadays, only the Santana models are plying the streets, said the spokeswoman for Shouqi Group, Gong Haifeng. She said nearly all Austin and Quanshun taxis were taken out of service because they were too big and costly to maintain, and problems were discovered in some of the vehicles' features.

An operator for car rental hotline 961001 said that there are only 10 wheelchair-accessible taxis in the city. She said passengers who want to book a cab need to call a day in advance.

The situation in other cities

Beijing is not the country's first city to have wheelchair-accessible

taxis. In September last year, as many as 80 specially-adapted taxis featuring a rotating front passenger seat, were introduced in Shanghai. Meanwhile, the Regulations on the Management of Accessible Taxis in Shanghai were enacted by the Shanghai Traffic Management Bureau in the same month.

Shanghai's handicap taxis look the same as its regular taxis, except for a label on their body and rotating front seat. "They run like other taxis, but we ensure they are given to disabled people when passengers make a booking," said Cheng Lin, the spokesman of Qiangsheng Group, who runs 30 wheelchair-accessible taxis in Shanghai.

In Hangzhou, there were at least 100 of these taxis by the end of 2007; while there were 20 in Foshan, Guangdong Province as of September. These taxis look similar to Shanghai's.

"The problem of Beijing's accessible taxis lie in their flashy appearance but limited usability," said Jin, of Dongcheng District's Sports Federation for the Disabled.

To some extent, the situation of Beijing's public transportation reflects the city's problem with accessibility, he said. Taxis, a modern convenience should be given more attention, he added.

The capital, which is spread out, has become more accessible over the past years. But disabled people have been left out; they rarely go around the city on a daily basis.

According to government statistics, some 6 percent of the country's population is either mentally or physically disabled, and that Beijing has close to one million disabled residents.

Gong, Shouqi Group's spokeswoman, said the company has informed the authorities of the problems facing wheelchair-accessible taxis. They are now waiting for a response.

In the mean time, the lives of some cabs and cab drivers hang in the balance.

Looking back at 2008

Top events

1 Financial crisis: bail out the West?

The most pressing global issue nowadays is the financial crisis. With nearly US \$2 trillion (13.6 trillion yuan) worth of foreign currency reserves, the country is being touted by some quarters as the potential savior of the Western economy.

The country's burgeoning exports in recent years have helped it accumulate the world's largest foreign exchange reserves. Figures released this week show these reserves now total \$1.9 trillion.

Some analysts say the US could borrow some of this money. Could China really bail out the West?

Editor's view: The government said in a recent statement that it will focus more on internal problems, such as avoiding a domestic economic slowdown and keeping development at a suitable pace. China alone cannot solve the world's financial problems. Other emerging economies, such as Russia, India and Brazil, will have to help.

2 Earthquake: foreign aid workers

Following the 8.0-magnitude earthquake in Sichuan Province in May, international teams offered assistance in the search and rescue effort. Countries like Japan, Russia and Singapore, and regions such as Hong Kong and Taiwan sent teams to the southwestern province to help in the quake's aftermath.

The Japanese rescue team arrived first on May 17, with its 60 members facing landslides and ruined roads on its way to Sichuan's hardest-hit region. Altogether, overseas rescuers numbered at least 300, who searched for survivors and remains under the collapsed buildings.

Editor's view: Humanitarian aid has no boundaries. One of the pictures shot on May 18 that moved the nation shows a Japanese rescue team mourning the dead body they found in Qingchuan County. "The Japan team tried its best. Though no survivors were found, they are worthy of our respect," an anonymous netizen said on Xinhuanet.com.

3 Olympics: American killed at the Games

The father-in-law of a US Olympic coach was stabbed to death by a Chinese man on August 9, a day after the Games' opening ceremony. The assailant, 47, from eastern city of Hangzhou, also seriously wounded the man's wife and a Chinese tour guide before killing himself at Gulou (the Drum Tower).

The victims, Todd and Barbara Bachman of Lakeville, Minnesota, were the in-laws of US men's indoor volleyball team head coach, Hugh McCutcheon.

The Bachmans, who were visiting the city during the Games, were not wearing apparel that identified them as relatives of members of the US delegation at the time of the attack.

Editor's view: Although the assailant was later diagnosed as mentally ill and unrelated to terrorist organizations, the incident made news worldwide and cast a shadow over the start of the competition.

Attacks against foreigners are rare, especially during the Olympics when over 100,000 police and military personnel were deployed to safeguard the Games.

"China is still the friendliest place to Americans among all I've traveled," Jeff Bass, a US teacher, said. "I still feel safer walking down the street here in the middle of the night than I do in Philadelphia."

4 Tibet: reopens to foreign tourism

More than three months after a wave of riots erupted in mid-March, Tibet reopened to foreign tourists in June. The decision came just days after the Olympic torch's visit to the region occurred without incident.

Editor's view: This is good news for Tibet where at least 100,000 people work in the tourism industry, which makes up 70 percent of Lhasa's GDP.

For people outside China who doubt democracy in Tibet, the best way to settle the issue is to come for a visit now that its doors are wide open.

By Huang Daohen

"For China, this has been an unusual year," Premier Wen Jianbao has said this line numerous times, on various occasions to mark the year.

In 2008, the world came to know the country with an unprecedented intimacy: It confronted enormous challenges brought by a snow storm in January and a powerful earthquake in May; and in August, it successfully hosted an Olympic Games unparalleled in its spectacle.

Expats in the country were also an indispensable part of the year, when China underwent profound changes. Below are Beijing Today's pick of the year's top events, people and blogs.



The Japanese team was the first overseas rescuers arriving in Sichuan Province. IC Photo



Netizens from home and abroad were engaged in the post-quake relief work. IC Photo



A spectator cries during the Games when Liu Xiang fell in the first round of 110m hurdles. CFP Photo

5 Netizens: boycott CNN, French goods

The Beijing Olympics and its torch relay gave the country's 290 million netizens a chance to use its collective power to play a positive role in the events.

During the overseas torch relay in March and April, netizens strongly condemned Tibetan activists for disrupting the relay in London, Paris and San Francisco. They also launched campaigns to boycott French goods.

Jin Rao, 23, created an anti-CNN Web site in response to what she claims are lies and distortion of facts in the Western media concerning national unity and the 2008 Tibetan unrest. The site attracted world media attention.

Editor's view: This year, interaction on the Internet was the most distinguishing feature of Chinese citizens' participation in politics. Netizens, called by President Hu Jintao "the most powerful voices besides the government," have become a powerful force in social and public affairs. This shows that history is not always made by giants.

6 Food security: FDA opens Beijing office

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) opened its first overseas office here in late November. The office will aim at keeping a stringent check on food and drug imports to the US.

The FDA said the office will work closely with the country's food security authorities. The FDA has also opened offices in Shanghai and Guangzhou.

On the domestic front, the Ministry of Health said the country will soon be sending officials for food and drug quality control to the US.

Editor's view: Food security is a top concern of every nation. Although China and the US have different regulatory systems, the move of dispatching officials will guarantee that exports are in line with the receiving country's standards.

In the future, if melamine is found in infant milk formula exported to the US, the presence of the toxic substance will no longer be the sole responsibility of Chinese institutions.

7 Environment: Boycott chopsticks

Environmental group Greenpeace launched a campaign early this year targeting disposable chopsticks in Beijing.

The organization worked with several restaurants and dining Web sites to spread the importance of using washable chopsticks, and asked individuals to carry their own chopsticks when eating out.

The campaign continues, but Greenpeace has realized that it is not so easy to change people's dining habits.

Editor's view: Statistics show that China produced 13.4 billion pairs of chopsticks in 1999 and the number jumped to 63.5 billion in 2006. It is time to make more people aware of the environmental damage caused by unwise consumption habits.

8 TCM: Americans' weight loss journey

To shed pounds, three people from the States headed to China and became surprise celebrities.

Alonzo Bland, 33, and brothers Walt and David Anderson, 56 and 50, have lived in the northern city of Tianjin since mid-2008 as part of an effort to break away from their unhealthy lifestyles back home.

To date, the three men have lost a combined 192 kilograms and are aiming to shed 100 more.

They decided to come here after winning a contest titled Winners in Life, sponsored by a US firm promoting Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The prize was one year of free treatment in China.

Editor's view: According to their doctor, TCM played a major role in the men's weight loss. Every morning, the three go for acupuncture, which increases metabolism and reduces appetite.

But TCM aside, the key is the individual's will: As long as you carry on, you will succeed.

Biggest personalities

1 Sharon Stone

Comments anger the nation

Before May this year, it would not have been surprising if locals did not know Hollywood actress Sharon Stone. Now, it would be strange.

She set off a storm of fury across the country after she suggested that the Sichuan earthquake, which killed over 80,000 people, was due to "bad karma."

Those two words brought her great loss: several Chinese cinemas stopped screening her movies; boutiques of Christian Dior, to which she is an endorser, removed posters of her inside major department stores; the Internet exploded with angry comments about her.

Although Stone made amends for her comment, she cannot take back her words. And like what many netizens said, nobody wants to see her anymore. Her career in China is over.

At least she gave celebrities an important lesson: Be careful about comments you make in public. When you are famous, you no longer speak for yourself alone.

2 Boris Johnson

Improper outfit put him in trouble

Even after Britain's Olympians returned home at the end of the Beijing Games, they left behind a fierce debate about the behavior of Boris Johnson, mayor of London, which is hosting the next Summer Olympics.

Local media and bloggers described Johnson as "arrogant, rude and disrespectful" after he accepted the Olympic Flag with only one hand and an unbuttoned jacket at the turn-over ceremony.

The mayor said he could not see what he did wrong; he merely behaved in his usual manner. If we look at Johnson's pattern of behavior, it is not difficult to understand why he acted that way in Beijing.

Johnson is known in Britain for his unconventional words and behavior, which has won him hordes of fans – and critics.

But no matter how furious the debate, he is still the man at the helm of the 2012 Olympics. And his Beijing experience should teach him to button his jacket when he goes on stage.

3 Jim Rogers

Chinese shareholders' tutor

Jim Rogers is on our list not because he co-founded the Quantum Hedge Fund and is considered an "investment legend," but because of his influence on Chinese shareholders.

Rogers has a deep love for China: He has visited the country again and again; he has said many times that the Chinese stock market has potential; and he wants his daughters to learn *putonghua*.

To shareholders, he is a dictator and a fortune-teller. Whatever he says becomes a gem.

Despite turbulence in the local stock market in the last two years, which has resulted in losses to shareholders, many people remain Rogers's avid fans.

But is he really an investment god? Obviously not. No matter how smart he is, he still cannot see into the future.

4 Brian Robinson

Actions warm the heart

Doctor Brian Robinson was one of the first expat volunteers to come to the rescue of Sichuan earthquake victims. As a representative of the US-based humanitarian organization Heart to Heart International, he gathered a team of 15 other expat volunteers a day after the May 12 quake occurred.

In addition to his charity work, Robinson became famous for a video that shows Premier Wen Jiabao shaking his hand and thanking him for helping the country.

The video, which was shown by local media a week after the 7.9-magnitude tremor happened, warmed the heart of the people. It came at a time when everyone felt fragile in the face of such a huge natural disaster. The video has also made locals more aware of expat volunteer groups.

Since the quake first struck, foreigners from all over the country have been eager to lend a hand. Love without boundaries has been Robinson's strongest message.

By Han Manman

As the year comes to a close, let us look back at the foreign personalities who have left a mark on the nation's consciousness.

The following eight people come from different walks of life: some are movie stars, others are politicians, while some are just ordinary citizens. But no matter who they are and where they live, they made headlines in China and became household names. For good or ill, they reflect what was considered important this year.



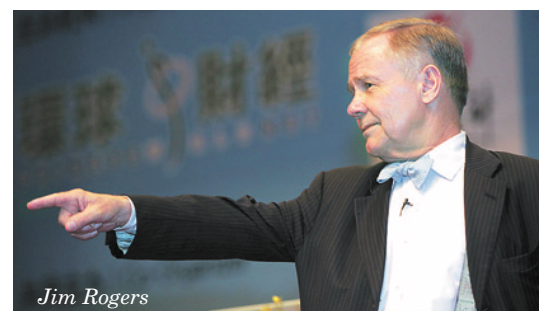
Sharon Stone
CFP Photos

Boris Johnson



Honglaowai

Photo provided by 52 photoshop.cn



Jim Rogers

5 Honglaowai

Singing patriotic songs naked

"Red songs," or those that evoke patriotic sentiments, are out of fashion among the younger Chinese generation.

However, a 20-something blogger from New York who calls himself Honglaowai, or Red Foreigner, has revived the songs on video-sharing Web sites such as YouTube, Youku and Tudou.

His half-naked performance of red songs, with Chairman Mao's portrait behind him, quickly spread online. The video's viewership easily topped 100,000 and made him an instant Internet celebrity. His Wall Street work background, coupled with hazy details about his real life, has fueled the interest in him.

Honglaowai, who considers himself a comrade, has also quoted from Chairman Mao's past speeches, for example, "If there were no Communist Party, then there would be no new China."

Nobody knows if he is doing this because he believes in communism or if he is just after some fun. But one thing is for sure – his performance provides some light-hearted moments after dinner.

6 Tim Lies

US teacher boycotts US movie

It is common for a Chinese moviegoer to boycott Hollywood movies based on claims of "cultural invasion." But when a US citizen does this, it becomes news.

Many locals fell in love with the Hollywood animation *Kung Fu Panda*, but Tim Lies, clad in an "I Love China" T-shirt, went to a movie theater in town with a placard that said "Boycott *Kung Fu Panda*."

Lies, an English teacher at Peking University, said locals do not need to be told what their culture is by a foreign movie made on the other side of the world.

It is not clear what motivates Lies, but his protest caused a chain reaction. Many Chinese people boycotted the movie, saying, "If an American himself boycotts his own country's movie, then we need to support him."

An anti-*Kung Fu Panda* group later on had a furious debate with a group supporting the movie. Meanwhile, some directors asked why China cannot produce such an animated movie, and how Westerners can accurately depict the culture.

7 Cho Soo-Jin

Sexy Korean coach shows up at the Olympics

One Korean woman's face turned many heads in the audience during the Beijing Olympics.

South Korean Cho Soo-Jin, 34, president of China's top cheerleading team, Soojin Dance, was dubbed by the media "sexy goddess of the sports arena." BOCOG appointed her advisor to the Olympic cheerleading performers, as well as director of the basketball cheerleading teams.

Although the Games made her a familiar face, months of free consulting work resulted in losses to her dance business. Some of her staff resigned because she could not even pay their salary.

8 Kerry Berry Brogan

Hottest Western face

Having starred in more than 40 television and film projects in the country over the last five years, US actress Kerry Berry Brogan holds an almost complete monopoly on Western roles in local productions. Her extensive screen appearances, particularly this year, earned her the label "hottest Western face in China."

Ironically, it was her popularity here that allowed her to become known in her hometown of Newton, Massachusetts. Some of the city's newspapers even invited her to write a column on Chinese culture.

Blogging about China

By Annie Wei

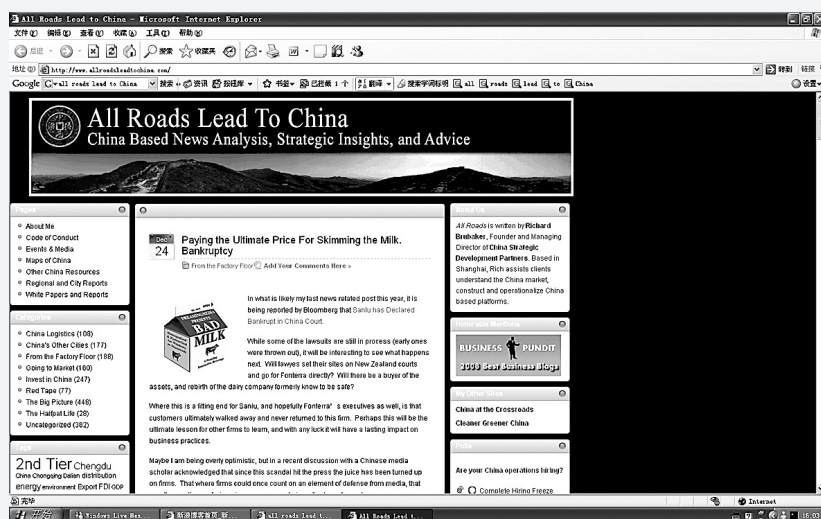
Well-written blogs provide an intimate look into China. *Beijing Today* talks to some of this season's popular English bloggers to get their take on the biggest news, the financial crisis and Beijing's expats.

Focuses on interesting debates

Fons Tuinstra of China Speakers Bureau

Captures fresh stories

Richard Brubaker of All Roads Lead to China



Brubaker runs three blogs: All Roads Lead to China, which covers business analysis and news; Crossroads on corporate social responsibility and civil society; and Cleaner Greener China that talks about environmental policy, technology and people. Each site gets between 4,000 and 5,000 viewers a day.

BT: What articles on your blog do you find most interesting?

RB: At All Roads, the primary interest of readers recently has been what the impact of the global crisis will be on business in China. Some are quite concerned about the potential impacts on their businesses, while others see this as an opportunity to further expand into China.

At Crossroads, the Sichuan earthquake was our biggest issue of the year. I am proud to say that we were focused only on what NGOs in

the area needed rather than act as a PR billboard for corporate announcements. Many of our readers responded by donating money, blankets and giving logistics support to those in need.

At Cleaner Greener China, the big story was "cleantech" and sustainability. More than solar panels and hybrids, the readers here are interested in urban planning, resource management, clean transportation technologies and government regulations.

BT: What do you reckon were "big news" that had a big impact on society?

RB: In 2008, the biggest global stories were the Beijing Olympics, the global financial situation and the US election. However, there are many more stories in China that my readers were interested in – inflation, labor shortages, and energy shortages.

BT: Do you think there have been significant changes in Beijing's expat community in 2008?

RB: Yes, many left! We have also seen several distinct expat-related developments. First was prior to the Beijing Games when visa regulations were tightened. The second round has come more recently as firms reduced their expatriate management.

BT: Does the international financial crisis have any impact on your business?

RB: Of course. We feel that 2009 will be a more difficult year than previous years, and it will require some changes in the business.

We are fortunate to have a core group of clients who are focused on expanding their existing investments, and that will keep us busy in the areas of logistics, real estate and sustainability – three important areas for China going forward.

Tuinstra used to be a foreign correspondent in Shanghai, and now part of his work is explaining how new media works, blogs included. He has worked on 10 different blogs over the past few years, mostly for month-long projects, but China Speakers Bureau has now become his base. It provides speakers on China mostly for American and European clients. This blog has 5,000 visitors per day.

BT: What articles on your blog do you consider most interesting?

FT: What I focus on is debate on China; not a black and white picture, but the many shades of gray that come with every good debate. So in my selection of articles and links to other blogs, I look for those elements that, in my view, need more attention. There are many important debates I would not discuss: If everybody else is doing this already and I would not really be able to add any value.

BT: What news do you think has had a strong impact?

FT: That is a tough question, because perceptions on what is important vary quite a lot.

Since my audience is mainly an English language audience, I tend to explain a lot for people who have no clue about China; this would be less interesting for most Chinese. The economic crisis and what it might or might not mean for China is of course a very important issue these days.

BT: Does the world economic crisis have any impact on your business?

FT: For my speakers' bureau, it is very hard to see the effect since we have only been active since last summer, so our business can only go up. We had some setbacks, as some potential clients had to back off, because of funding problems. The Madoff scandal, in particular, seems to have caused much damage among well-funded organizations and charities that no longer has funding to invite speakers.

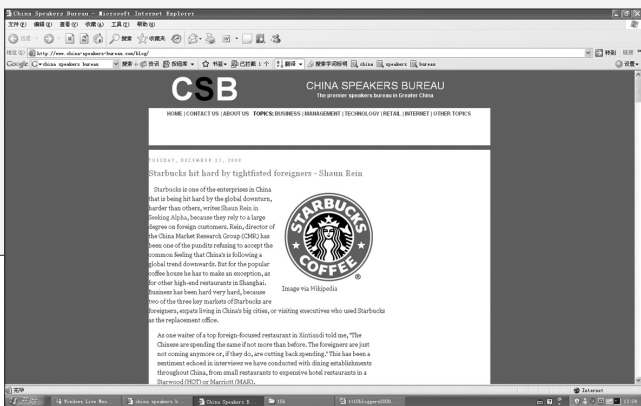
For 2009, we think that the economic crisis might actually help us, since there is a huge interest in what China is doing and we provide experts needed for this kind of discussion.

BT: What advice on blogging would you give Beijing Today readers?

I would not make blogging too big. A blog is a tool, like deciding when to use a bicycle, a car or an airplane to go from point A to B.

You need to have an idea what kind of audience you want to capture, what kind of conversation you find important, and then get the tools for that network. In the past year, Twitter, Friendfeed, Facebook and others have also become important tools for me to conduct a conversation.

Organizing that conversation is key; the tools you use come second.



Explains Chinese law in English

Dan Harris of China Law Blog

Written by two international lawyers, Steve Dickinson in China and Dan Harris in the US, this blog focuses on business law in the country. It garners at least 100,000 viewers per month.

BT: What articles on your blog do you think are the most interesting?

DH: The most interesting articles on our site are those where we talk about how Chinese law impacts foreign business in China. We are the only blog on Chinese law that has a blogger who reads the laws in Chinese and then explains them in English.

China is increasingly moving



towards regulating its businesses like more developed countries. Foreign businesses often hear about the China of five years ago and

assume legal enforcement is just as it was then, but it is not. Enforcement of laws against foreign companies has been growing every year

and it has reached the point where it nearly always pays for foreign companies to do their utmost to follow the law.

BT: What do you consider "big news" that strongly impacts Chinese society or the world?

DH: From the perspective of our blog, it would have to be China's moving towards the rule of law with respect to its handling of business matters.

BT: Has the international credit crisis affected your practice? How?

DH: Believe it or not, it has greatly increased our business. A number of companies see China as

the key source for growth in the world and they are stepping up their efforts to go there. A number of other clients are viewing cost cutting as more important than ever and they are stepping up their efforts to go there. Most importantly, though, a number of clients, both Western and Chinese, are finding themselves not getting paid and they are retaining our law firm to pursue legal action. Then add to that the increased number of joint ventures that are unraveling, and you have everyone in my law firm working more hours than they ever have, which is a good thing, I must say.

Speedy, hands-free toll collection

By Wang Yu

The Beijing Municipal Committee of Communication announced that from last Sunday, highway drivers can pay toll fees without stopping their vehicles with the Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system. At least 87 toll gates in Beijing have been installed with an ETC.

Drivers need to attach an electronic label on the inside of their car's windshield, where a Sutong

Card, or an electronic wallet, is inserted. Once the car passes an ETC-equipped toll gate, the fee will automatically be deducted from the card.

To avoid delay, the committee said in a written notice that cars which do not have electronic labels should avoid "ETC only" toll gates. ETC users need to keep their speed under 20 kilometers per hour and keep a distance of at least 10 meters from the vehicle in front.

Electronic labels are available at any of the committee's service office for 450 yuan. The Sutong Card is free of charge, but it has to maintain a balance of at least 50 yuan.

There are 13 service offices throughout the city, where drivers can also recharge their Sutong Cards. People who purchase the card need to present their driver's license. Foreigners need to show their passport and register

at the office. Door-to-door delivery is offered to groups.

The committee also said in the notice that in the future, Sutong Cards can be recharged at ATM machines. Users who lose their cards should inform a service office immediately.

For the committee's service office locations, check out bjetc.cn or call its 24-hour hotline 6763 2672. Offices are open from 9 am to 5 pm everyday.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

Our family recently moved into a courtyard house and we're planning a big New Year's party. My Chinese friends told me about *Meilangfang*, a movie about a famous Beijing Opera singer, and I thought hiring some Beijing Opera actors would be a nice addition to our party. How do I go about doing this?

You can get in touch with Beijing Fenglei Jingjutuan (fengleibjo.com) at 6301 7386. Its manager Song Yan said the Beijing Opera group has a tight schedule until the end of the year, but it is worth a call to see if it can accommodate you. Otherwise, just ask for another recommendation.

I's planning to get married and want to know if the marriage registry is open on weekends.

Beginning January 1, the civil bureau's marriage registry starts working every Saturday except legal holidays. For foreigners marrying Chinese citizens, he or she can call 96156 or 6203 5724 for more information.

I always have meals and groceries delivered to my apartment. None of the delivery people have ever asked for a tip, but I feel obligated to give them something. How much should I give? Is it true that Chinese people do not tip?

Tipping is not a common Chinese practice, but an increasing number of young people are now tipping, especially for food delivery. How much to give is a personal choice.

(By Wei Ying)

Child exemption from train tickets broadened



The height of Chinese children has increased by 6 centimeters over the past 30 years, according to the latest census taken in December 2006.

CFP Photo

By Zhao Hongyi

Child passengers less than 1.1 meters tall are exempted from paying for train tickets for hard or soft seaters in non-air-conditioned carriages. Those less than 1.5 meters tall only need to pay half the price, the Ministry of Railways said this week.

The new guideline increases the height measurement by 10 centimeters. The ministry said this is to meet market demand and accommodate changes in the population's demographics.

The new regulation applies to all children regardless of nationality. But children who qualify for an exemption must be accompanied by adults on a one-to-one basis.

Children who take air-conditioned or sleeper carriages will be charged the regular fare.

Contest seeks video on climate

By He Jianwei

The weather forecast receives one of the highest television ratings in the country, according to statistics. Riding on the coattails of this trend, Beijing Channel Zero Media, a documentary producer and distributor, launched a non-fiction short film contest on Saturday that focuses on the climate.

"Whether it is the disaster caused by the heavy snowfall in southern China early this year, or Hurricane Katrina that swept the US in 2005, news related to climate change is becoming central to people's lives," He Zhiwen, from Beijing Channel Zero Media, said.

The contest welcomes any entry related to climate, including

meteorological disasters, meteorological spectacles, the natural atmosphere and customs and food influenced by the climate.

"If you carefully observe life and nature, you can make a short film about how some migratory birds spend winter in Beijing, or how people living in southern China spend winter without heating," He said.

The best 100 videos will be chosen in the middle of next year, and will be uploaded onto YouTube and Youku.

All entries must include Chinese subtitles and run between one and three minutes. No entry fee will be charged.

Interested parties can check outasamplevideoonyoutube.com/user/channelzeromediadv.

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*Jin Xing illustrates the ancient love story
through modern dance.*
Photos provided by Poly Theater





Searching for classic love in the modern world

By Zheng Lu

Modern dance, as defined by dance choreographer Jin Xing, is a communication between the dancer and the audience. She and her Shanghai-based Jin Xing Modern Dance Company returned to Beijing this winter with their new performance, an ancient love story through modern dance.

The dancers shook crazily, chanting the names of fast foods like a mantra as a girl in ancient costume adorned with peony patterns. She was glamorous and beautiful, but also so inconsistent in the scene. She was Du Liniang, protagonist of the *Peony Pavilion*, an ancient Kun opera; behind her was the soul, played by Du.

Made in China: Return of the Soul, the drama-based dance was staged at the Poly Theatre last weekend. Jin first planned the dance nine years ago. "I was so ambitious then," Jin said, talking about her plans to choreograph the whole *Peony Pavilion*.

Years later, she found it impossible to take on the huge project and decided to focus on the core scene of the drama, adding to it new elements.

Du Liniang is a young girl who fell in love with a man who appeared only in her dreams. Because she was lovesick and could not meet him in reality, she fell ill and died. Later, the man she dreamed of appeared, opened her tomb, revived her and married her.

Jin adored Du's dating with her lover in her dream the most, so she selected that scene as the basis for her dance. It tells the story of a passionate love – the kind forgotten in modern society.

In the first scene of the dance, there were women workers who weaved their hearts out. "They represent modern women who weave their own dreams in this fast-paced world," Jin said.

The dancers morphed from gifted scholars and beautiful ladies into fashionable youngsters on streets lined with skyscrapers. When Du fell asleep, her soul Jin came out to date her beloved. Her dance was slow and gentle, which revealed a girl indulged in romance. But Du woke up and found herself in the noisy, blazing 21st century – trapped in a web of commodities.

She looked bewildered when she saw modern couples dating while wearing masks. It was as if love was also for sale. Her soul stood in the shadow, watching carefully and worrying Du would be assimilated.

"I (the soul) want to tell Du to 'love as I do, to keep her dreams about love and not be too realistic,'" Jin said. "How many women today still dream of pure love and cling to it as Du had?" she said.

Jin said she admired Du for her persistence. "One should love at least once with all his or her heart and soul: Du did so in a dream," she said. Jin wanted to not only awaken Du, but "make every modern woman realize she has some similarities with the heroine."

Jin invited Lutz Glandien, a German musician to score for the dance. She told him the synopsis of the *Peony Pavilion* and left the rest up to his understanding. Many Chinese instruments were used, but with a fresh sound to both Chinese and foreigners.

"The composer used a Guzheng, but he doesn't know how to play it. He positioned it vertically and played it

like a guitar," she said. The effect was entirely different.

The music created a tranquil atmosphere as Du wandered her garden, and then changed to a strong, fast tempo laced with car horns when the world became modern.

"Modern dance is a human art form that naturally involves the audience," Jin said. The dance does not require people to understand its meaning. "It doesn't matter. Be it the costume or the music or something else, if one element moves you, the artist has succeeded," she said. She wanted only to communicate with her audience: she said it was what she was born for.

She and her company have a fixed audience, 60 percent of which are foreigners. "My foreign audience can rarely get a ticket when I perform in their countries – seats are reserved long in advance," she said, noting her Chinese tickets are easier to obtain – something she said was due to the cost.

"It's unreasonable that tickets for theater performances are so expensive in China," Jin said. The highest priced tickets cost several thousand yuan per seat. "That keeps ordinary people from having a chance to appreciate the arts," she said. By contrast, Jin said she never allows her highest to sell for more than 600 yuan.

During her eight years in Shanghai, Jin's life changed dramatically.

Her children came first, then her husband. "I lived the life of a renter, always going to places by taxi and at odd hours. But after I adopted my first child, I gave that up to earn money. My child needed a house!" she said.

The early days were arduous, she said: "We stood in the rain holding my little son in my arms and could not find a taxi." Her children became her motivation, and she became a single mom who put them first. Later she adopted two more abandoned babies. "I feel grateful for my children: they changed me," she said.

Soon after she adopted her third child, Jin met Heinz Gerd. "He is very thoughtful and helped me with my career. He recognized my distraction as the start of a creative spurt, and would take the children away to give me time to concentrate," Jin said.

She likened her gifts to manna from heaven. "I felt lucky to grow into a real woman. When I had kids I did dare to ask for more, life has treated me so well. But now I have a complete family and my own dance company," she said.

Jin's company was the country's first private dance company and will soon pass the 10-year mark.

"I am living the life I dreamed of when I was 17 or 18," she said.

With her dreams satisfied, it seemed like she could finally be content, but the silence provided fertile ground for a new dream: "Now my dream is to build my own theatre in [China] and start my own school there," she said.

Her eyes glistened, "It will come true."



Writer more than Dylan's Muse

By Charles Zhu

Greenwich Village in New York is so famous a haunt of well-known writers, singers, painters and dramatists that the mention of its name makes people nostalgic for artistic radicalism. To musical fans' delight, *A Freewheelin' Time: A Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties* (371pp, US \$22.95, Broadway Books), by Suze Rotolo, recounts a rare and memorable affair with Bob Dylan, the singer-songwriter, author, poet and painter who has been a major figure of popular music.

Many of Dylan's most distinguished works date from the 1960s, when he became a chronicler and voice of those turbulent years. A number of his songs, such as "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are a-Changin'," became anthems of the civil rights movements of the sixties that ushered in an entirely new era for US politics. His most recent studio album, *Modern Times*, released in 2006, entered the US charts at number one and was named Album of the Year by Rolling Stone.

His music recorded his country's political, social, philosophical and literary influences. He is totally unconventional and ardently embraces counterculture. As a

versatile artist, he has incorporated in his lyrics traditions from folk, blues and country to gospel, rock and roll and swing.

The author, born to an Italian artist father and a newspaper reporter mother, first met Dylan at age 17 in the summer of 1961 in New York. Dylan, 20, was an ordinary singer at an all-day folk concert at Riverside Church in Manhattan. Dylan in his 2004 memoir *Chronicles: Volume One* described the first encounter with Rotolo, who wore a dress with eye-popping thigh-high slits, "She was the most erotic thing I'd ever seen." Rotolo thought of him as "oddly old-time looking, charming in a scraggy way." She, as a sophisticated New Yorker, helped broaden the visions of Dylan, a country boy from Hibbing, Minnesota. She was his libertine heroine.

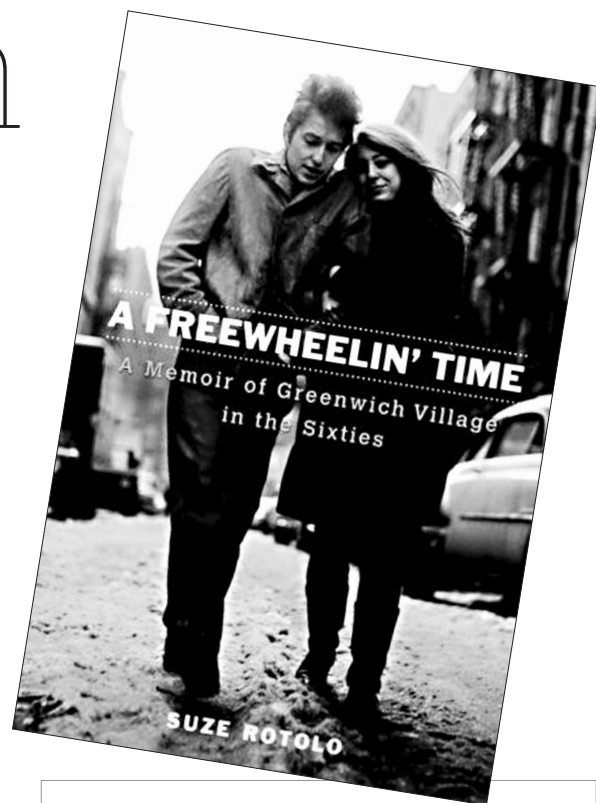
Though Dylan's career was on the rise, Rotolo left New York for Italy to pursue art. Dylan wrote her many moving love letters, some of which are excerpted in the memoir. For instance, Dylan once wrote, "It's just that I'm hating time. I'm trying to push it by - I'm trying to stab it - stomp on it - throw it on the ground and kick it - bend it and twist it with gritting teeth and burning eyes - I hate that I love you." He wrote songs about

her to comfort his longings such as "Bob Dylan's Blues" and "Down the Highway."

When she returned to America, she moved to Greenwich Village and became the singer's Venus in his walk-up apartment. However, she found life as the girlfriend of a rising pop singer increasingly unpleasant. She wished to have her own world and career, more than being just Dylan's "chick." She was not satisfied with only being "permitted to sit at the table, where they (women and girls) would be served without any hesitation, but they were not to ask for any more." She made a secret visit to Cuba in 1964 where she met with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

She finally broke up with Dylan because, as she described it, she was unable to provide Dylan, then a superstar with fans around the world, "committed backup and protection" - things she needed herself.

While their love see-sawed back and forth, Dylan fell in love with Joan Baez. When Rotolo heard he was touring with Baez, she attempted to kill herself, as Howard Sounes narrated in *Down the Highway: The Life of Bob Dylan*. Rotolo made little mention of this in her memoir and did not attempt to correct Sounes.



Timezone8 book listing

Timezone8 is a Hong Kong-based publisher, distributor and retailer of books on contemporary art, architecture, photography and design. This week, it lists its three top-selling design books for *Beijing Today* readers.

Xu Shun: Occurrence

By Mark Gisbourne, 96pp, US \$44.00, Timezone8

Chinese painter Xu Shun uses photographic materials and images derived from popular press in his hushed, almost monochromatic paintings. This volume collects work from 2007 and 2008. As Xu's use of such sources implies, they provoke a chosen point of departure in order for him to make a painting.

Wang Di: Ego/Structure - Red Dwellings

By A Cheng, Yin Jinan and Wang Di, 174pp, US \$50.00, Timezone8

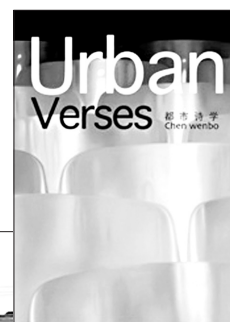
The book comprises of the latest photos of musician and photographer Wang Di, best known for his photo-documentation of punk rock in China in the 1990s. Wang's photography focuses on the distinctive Russian style of architecture in Beijing from the 1950s to the 1970s, both interiors and exteriors.

Urban Verses: Chen Wenbo

By Huang Du, Li Jianchun and Chen Wenbo, 232pp, US \$60.00, Timezone8

Chen Wenbo shows the night of the soul in contemporary humanity, a visual specimen collected in the darkness.

(By He Jianwei)



Local history seen by the west

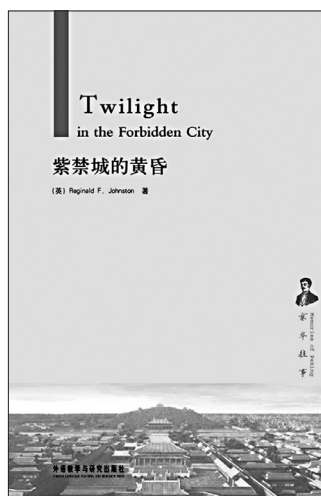
By He Jianwei

Since it became capital of China during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Beijing has welcomed many Western guests, including tourists, businessmen and missionaries. Some even worked as government officials. They brought Western culture to China at a time of great exchange.

They also wrote books about their understanding of the country: what they saw and what they experienced. Their books opened a window for Western readers to learn more about the mysterious East.

Beijing is a hot topic for sinologists. Most works follow one of two paths: "One is the documentary works, including Westerners' diaries, letters, travelogues, memoirs and photos. Another is research monographs, including their studies on politics, economics, society, customs, architectures, Chinese religions, art and language," Ouyang Zhesheng, editor of *Memoires of Peking*, said.

Memoires is a series of five books published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, including



Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description Of Its Chief Places Of Interest (by Juliet Bredon, 364pp, 39.90 yuan), *Sidelights on Peking Life* (by Robert W. Swallow, 194pp, 24.90 yuan), *Memoirs of Father Ripa* (by Matteo Ripa, 232pp, 29.00 yuan), *Round About My Peking Garden* (by Archibald Little, 276pp, 34.90 yuan) and *Twilight in The Forbidden City* (by Reginald Fleming Johnston, 464pp, 48.90 yuan).

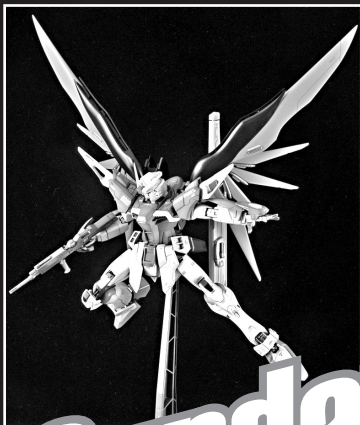
The five authors once lived in Beijing. "When their books were published, they became historical records about the city and helped shape readers' views of Beijing," Ouyang said.

Those books were written in the 19th and early 20th century and depict the city's historical image. The author of *Twilight* was the only Westerner in history allowed inside the inner court of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Johnston provided a first-hand account of daily life in the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace where he had lived. He also gave detailed descriptions of ceremonies including the last emperor Puyi's wedding.

Johnston described the last days of the Qing Dynasty before the 1911 Revolution. He observed many historically significant events and the Qing political structure.

"We hope these original books about Beijing can narrow the psychological distance between Western readers and the city. It was the first time we published the city's history from a Westerner's viewpoint," Ouyang said.



By Wang Yu

Though most Gundam TV series have not been broadcast locally, robot lovers can keep in step with Japanese viewers using file sharing programs like eMule and BitTorrent. The show has developed a cult following during the last few years.

To the average viewer, the man-shaped war machines are no more than another Sci-Fi toy built for kids. But for Gundam fans, the show is a parallel universe with a deep culture all its own.

Gundam toys for Sci-Fi boys



Assembling Gundam model has become a part of Huang Wenchao's job.

Photos provided by Huang Wenchao

History of another world

It is almost 30 years since Mobile Suits Gundam, the first Gundam TV series, began airing. The name "Gundam" is a portmanteau of the English "gun" and "dam," a word used in the Gundam universe to mean armed war robots.

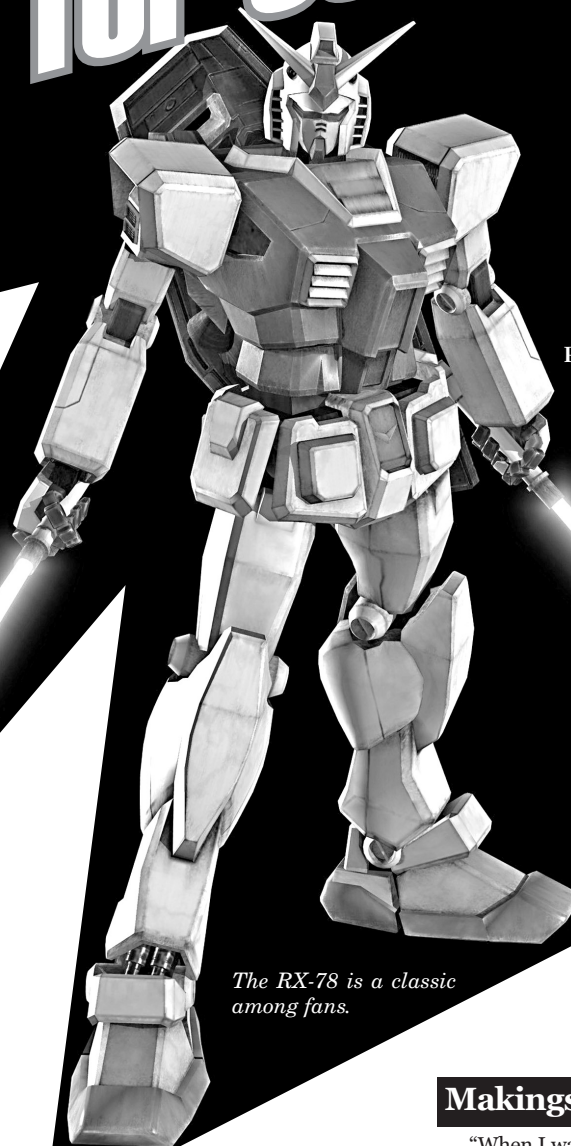
Unlike traditional Japanese super robot stories, Gundam pioneered realism in science fiction. The robot designs and the technology are derived from real science or are, at the least, feasible designs.

The animation, developed by famous animator Yoshiyuki Tomino, is set in a future time when billions of people live in space colonies that orbit the earth. These colonies formed a union called the Principality of Zeon and waged war against the Earth Federation, the "one year war" in the Gundam universe.

Using this simple framework, the history of the Gundam universe is continually extended. The original timeline is Universal Century, which the series refers to as the "classic era." Since 1990, the series has developed alternative timelines that make it increasingly complex for new viewers to get into the series.

However, it is the characters that keep fans coming back. The cast is thrust into the destruction and the dehumanization inherent in war, and the series has explored all aspects of conflict and each faction has its own heroes and villains.

"Many fans debate the philosophical issues of this fictive world, and its political conflicts can determine the outcome of a war just as they do in reality," said Howard Wang, a Gundam fan of 10 years.



The RX-78 is a classic among fans.

Makings of a mecha

"When I was in high school, my father would get upset if he found me building a Gundam model. I had to hide them in a small room until I went to college in Beijing," said Liu Yongchang, who works in the marketing department of a local newspaper.

Gundam model manufacture Bandai has developed several series for fans at different levels of construction experience. "Some are limited editions I bought from Japan," Liu said.

In Beijing, Gulou Dongdajie and Soshow Mall are the model makers' paradise.

"Making a regular Gundam model usually takes me more than 30 hours," Huang, the magazine editor, said. To make a perfect Gundam model takes more than assembling the parts in the box. Tools such as scissors, knives, files and sandpaper are a must.

"My first Gundam was built by my girlfriend and I in an all-night session. But looking back, it was a total failure since we didn't use any professional tools," Justin Chen said with a smile.

Most fans learn online how to assemble the models. "Compared with fans on the mainland, our Hong Kong friends are much more experienced. Bandai's products can be used together, so many of their works are re-creations from the blueprints," Huang said.

There are also "Robin Hood" models on the market which are low quality, but sold at a low price. "This junk can ruin the market," Chen said. Ironically, the pirate models have helped introduce Gundam to more people in lower income brackets. But hardcore Gundam enthusiasts see the quality of a model as a basic requirement.

"Gundam is a part of my career: it gives me joy and pain," Huang said. "But I still feel proud to look at my collection in its four showcases."

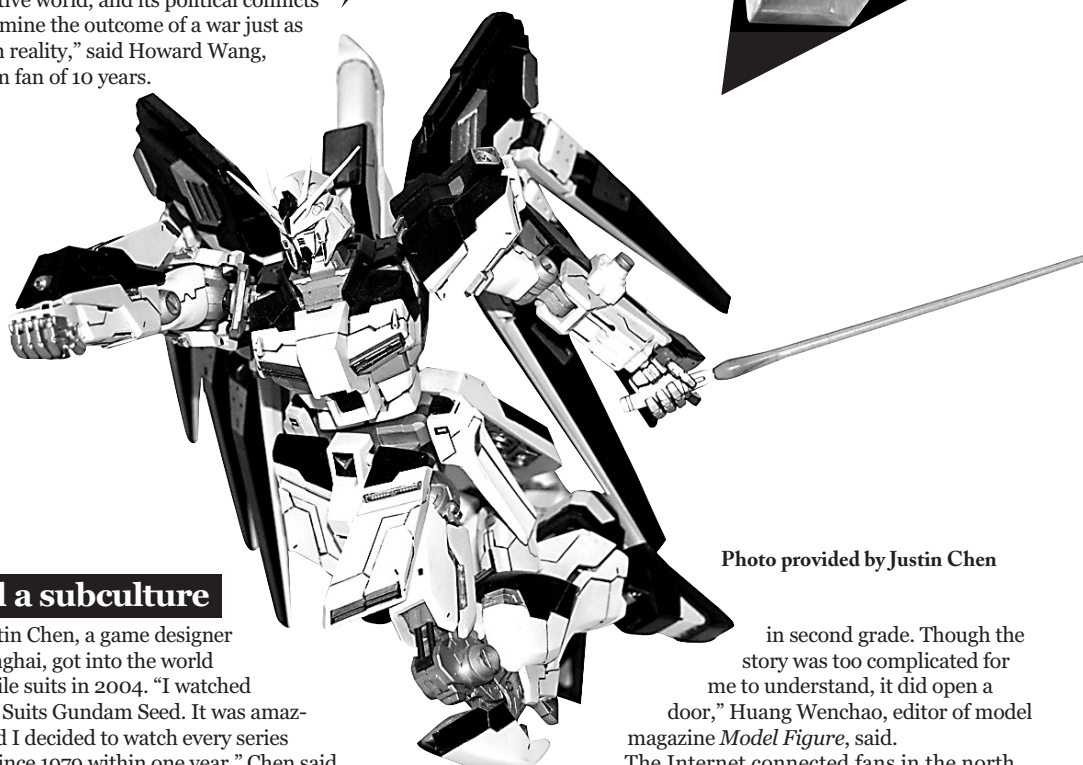


Photo provided by Justin Chen

Still a subculture

Justin Chen, a game designer in Shanghai, got into the world of mobile suits in 2004. "I watched Mobile Suits Gundam Seed. It was amazing, and I decided to watch every series made since 1979 within one year," Chen said.

He said his favorite part is the machodrama of war and the tragic fates of its heroes.

"As the series becomes more and more popular, the history is taking a back seat," Chen said.

Young people in cities on the southern coast were the earliest adopters of Gundam culture. Most television stations in Guangdong rebroadcast Hong Kong TV, which is almost in sync with Japanese releases.

"I first watched the initial series '0079' when I was

in second grade. Though the story was too complicated for me to understand, it did open a door," Huang Wenchao, editor of model magazine *Model Figure*, said.

The Internet connected fans in the north to the growing southern base. Where once they waited for pirated VCDs and DVDs to become available, they are now supplied by volunteers who translate and upload the episodes to streaming media Web sites within a week of airing.

The network connects Gundam fans all over the country. Many BBSes have formed where fans discuss the story, share the latest information and post Gundam fan fiction.

But the most common fan pursuit is mobile suit models.

Sanlitun's stylish edge

By Gan Tian

Sanlitun, the city's best-known bar street, refers to a general area in eastern Beijing's Chaoyang District: the nightlife hub around Workers' Stadium. Sanlitun's business grew alongside the economic reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s, with most bars serving expats. When shopping center The Village at Sanlitun opened this year just across the road, the old bar street gained a stylish edge.

The Village, made up of a cluster of low-rise buildings, has

amassed a collection of flagship stores of global brands. Swire Properties, its Hong Kong-based developer, described The Village as a leisure, culture and shopping community in the heart of the city. Among the first "villagers" to take up residence was Adidas, which built its largest store there.

The Village at Sanlitun

Where: 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6417 6110

Clothes and shoes for the adventurer

Aside from Adidas's flagship store, The Village also houses a Columbia sportswear store. Shoppers who are looking for clothes and shoes for mountain climbing, camping or hiking should drop by.

Founded in 1938, Columbia has grown from a small family-owned neighborhood store in the US to one of the world's top sportswear brands. Its product line includes a variety of outerwear, sportswear, rugged and casual footwear and accessories – which can all be found at their store in Sanlitun.

The company has developed a trademark outdoor sportswear technology, which include Omni-Tech jackets that are waterproof, windproof but breathable; Omni-Dry, a quick-dry material; and Omni-Grip, which gives shoes maximum traction for outdoor and multi-surface activities.

Also available at The Village is Columbia's Inter-

change Parka, the world's first trademark 3-in-1 coat that allows wearers to add or take out its outer or middle layer, depending on the weather and environment.

Shoppers who want to check out how the hiking shoes perform outdoors only need to go to the store's second floor. There is a specially designed sand-and-stone surface there, where customers can walk around in their intended purchase. Meanwhile, people who want to take a breather can relax at the shop's rest area, complete with a big LCD television screen.

Columbia Sportswear

Where: S8, The Village at Sanlitun, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6416 5534



Photo provided by Columbia Sportswear

Fashion and games

Facing Gongti Bei Lu, the Adidas Brand Center occupies 3,000 square meters of floor space or the size of nearly a football field. The store brings together the brand's various product lines under one roof – menswear, women's, kids, Y-3 and Adidas by Stella McCartney (the daughter of the Beatles' Paul McCartney). It also has a "mini coach core skills interactive area," where shoppers can play some games and get a score on his reaction, strength and speed. On the store's

south wall is its most impressive display – thousands of pairs of shoes inside a glass casing, made even more awesome by the lighting.

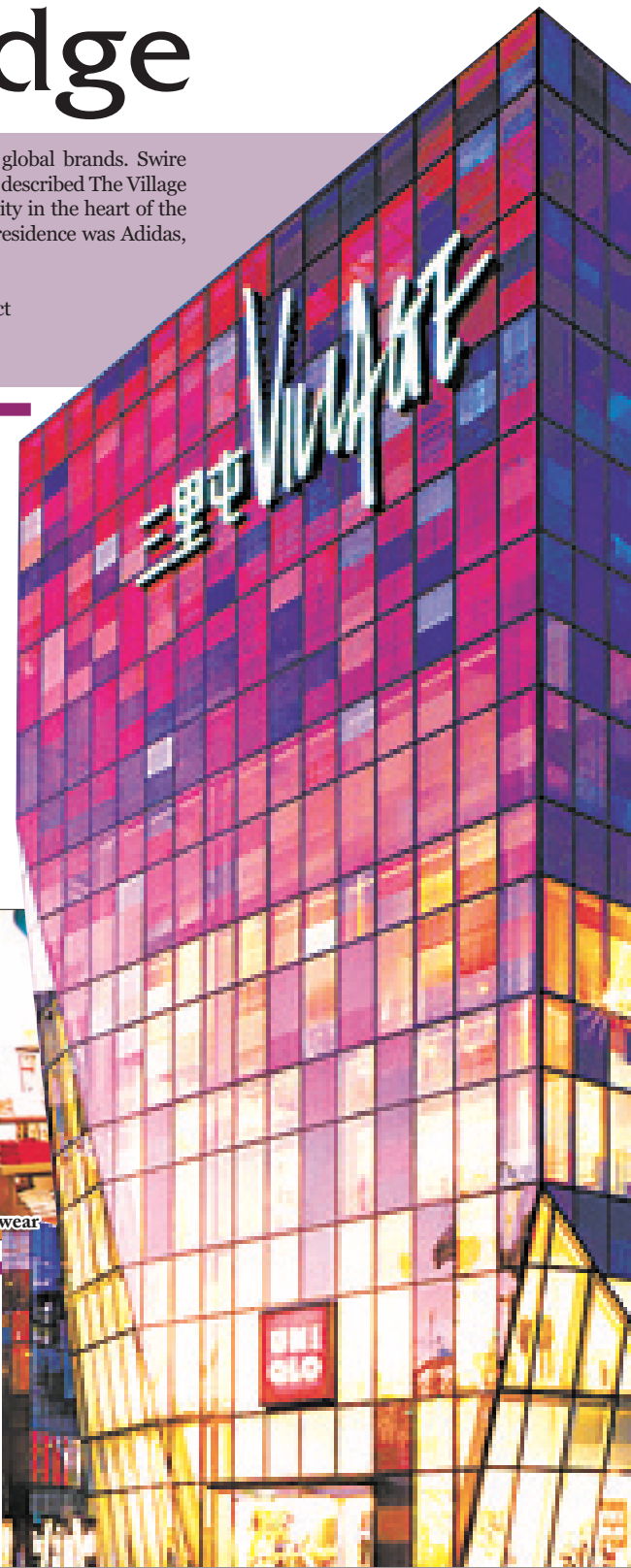
Adidas

Where: S11, The Village at Sanlitun, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6416 2233

Photo provided by The Village at Sanlitun



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Brunches at Sanlitun

By Annie Wei

On a chilly winter weekend, nothing is better than meeting up with friends for some comfort food at a cozy restaurant. This week, *Beijing Today* checks out brunches at four restaurants in The Village at Sanlitun, one of the newest "it" places for shopping and dining.

Element Fresh

Following its success in Shanghai, Element Fresh opened its first branch in Beijing at The Village's third floor. With its simple design and floor-to-ceiling windows, the restaurant offers a light and bright ambiance.

Its menu's main selling points are fresh juices and thick smoothies for the health-conscious, huge servings of salad and fusion fare. Smoothies, which come in small and large sizes, start at 28 yuan. Its brunch menu offers a range of deals: a simple toast-and-egg combo goes for 9 or 15 yuan, while big meal sets are between 38 and 68 yuan.

Other recommendations are the popular hummus plate at 58 yuan, and Asian sets, like the Chef Sweet and Succulent Chicken at 48 yuan.

There is usually a queue for brunch, so it is a good idea to call for a reservation.

Notes: Element Fresh offers organic coffee at 16 yuan for a small cup. It also has soy milk latte, but make sure to ask the server if the milk is sugar-free. Meanwhile, some of the fusion food here, like the Vietnamese noodles, might come across to some customers as too sweet.

Apart from brunch, it is also a nice place to hang out for evening drinks.

Element Fresh

Where: S8-31, The Village at Sanlitun, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6417 1318

Panino Teca

A lot of people like this chic little deli that offers a wide range of breads like baguettes, ciabattas and paninis. Each time one passes by this place, he or she can spot customers with a big white bowl of salad in front of them. The salads, which cost 28 to 34 yuan, can become a woman's summertime diet buddy.

Panino Teca's prices are more affordable compared to other restaurants in the area. Its popular tiramisu costs 28 yuan; a cappuccino is 20 yuan; and a sandwich is around 30 yuan. Two people can share a salad, a ciabatta sandwich, some Italian cheese and order drinks that will come down to 50 yuan per person.

Notes: Wang Xiaoxing, a former journalist for *Beijing Daily*, who successfully launched her Martha Stewart-like career by blogging about food on sina.com, has an interesting review on the deli. Wang, who gave the thumbs-up to the sandwiches at this place, said that during one busy time at the deli, she spotted a waiter pouring juice in a bottle that was quickly rinsed with tap water after it was cleared from another customer's table. She said people who are hygiene-conscious should avoid ordering coffee, free water, fresh juice or drinks served in a glass.

Panino Teca

Where: S2-11, The Village at Sanlitun, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6416 1416

Let's Burger

Let's Burger has a traditional European cafe's cozy look with its dark green door, high ceilings, chandelier, open kitchen and back-to-wall sofa seats.

Located on the first floor of Nali Patio, north of The Village, the restaurant is known for its juicy burgers and simple menu. Burgers range from 48 yuan (regular beef burger) to 168 yuan (special Japanese beef burger). Highly recommended is its popular Zhizun Hanbaowang at 148 yuan, which has beef, avocado, goose liver, organic vegetables, cheese and

a shrimp topping.

Let's Burger is also known for its refillable sauces, especially its chicken wing dip.

Many Western customers order baked potatoes with cheese. Diners who prefer the crunchy taste of a fried potato might find this a bit soggy.

The restaurant only has two desserts on its menu: chocolate cake and cheese cake. Some people find that a cup of coffee (26 yuan for a medium-sized cup) softens the sweetness of the chocolate cake (38 yuan per piece).

Huang Li, an employee from a department store in Sanlitun, said

she likes the atmosphere of Nali Patio more than The Village. Huang said that Nali, which is a renovated older building, has more character and chic compared to the newly-built The Village that is jam-packed with mass marketed brand name stores.

Notes: First-time visitors to Let's Burger should make sure they are dressed in warm-enough clothing, especially if they choose to sit close to the doors.

Let's Burger

Where: 1/F, Nali Patio, Sanlitun Bei Lu (north of The Village), Chaoyang District
Tel: 5208 6036

Photos by Bai Shan

A younger generation of contemporary artists

By Li Jing

798 Art District's SZ Art Center is holding a new exhibition – *My Own Way* – which hints at the free and easy life of its featured painters. Fresh works and young artists distinguish this 10-person exhibition from the gallery's usual offerings, which focus on classics.

All the exhibitors, fresh graduates of the best fine arts academies, were selected from nearly 100 candidates and "represent a younger generation of contemporary artists," Zhao Li, the curator, said.

Yuan Xin, 29, who received his master's degree from the Central Academy of Fine Arts last year, is an artist who knows his mind. In Transparent Crispness, he arranges objects in a glass rectangle. "Through the tangibility and transparency of glass, I want to reveal contradictory opinions associated with the difficulties and plights of modern life," Yuan said. "This is a fresh experiment in combining three dimensions and a plane in a planar painting." The depth of ideas conveyed was one criterion for getting into the exhibit.

The young artists are making a name for themselves in the growing market for contemporary art. "Our paintings sell well, partly because they are not highly priced," Yuan said. "The sale of our paintings can afford us studios and a comfortable

life," said Li Rui, 24, another exhibiting artist, whose studio is in Huantie Art District, not far from 798.

"Through the exhibition, we hope viewers can get fresh insights and discover changes that have taken place within the era," the curator Zhao said. "At the same time, we want young artists to revitalize the recessionary contemporary art market," he said.

My Own Way – Group Exhibition

Where: SZ Art Center, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 1, daily except

Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6435 9719



Friday, December 26

5

Exhibition Among Others – Budi Kustarto Solo Exhibition

In the Indonesian artist's works, the representation of the human body is seen as a search for meaning among entities that are not always connected to each other.

Where: Soka Art Center, B103 Sky & Sea Business Plaza, 107 Dongsu Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until January 18, daily
10 am – 9 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8401 2377, 8401 5810

A Winter in Beijing



Where: 3+3 Space, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until January 12, daily

10 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6437 9942

Movie Merry Christmas

Where: French Culture Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 5 pm
Admission: 10-20 yuan
Tel: 6553 2627



Nightlife Ding Dong

White Rabbit, in conjunction with Udance.cn, presents a day-after-Christmas gift: the infectious beat of Razor from Poland and the sublime tech-house of Simon Baker from Britain.

Where: White Rabbit Club, C2, Haoyun Jie, 29 Zaoying Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 11 pm
Cost: 70 yuan
Tel: 13321123678

Everything about Happiness

A music party featuring six bands, with guest band Which Park.

Where: Star Live, 79 Hepin Xi Lu, Dongcheng District
When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 60-70 yuan
Tel: 5123 3866

6

Saturday, December 27

Exhibition A Different Take

Where: Red Gate Gallery, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 31, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6438 1005

Rock Color – Group Exhibition

This is a group exhibition that is centered on the various colors of rocks.

Where: 94 Space, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until January 10, daily except Monday, noon – 5:30 pm; weekends 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8456 0467

Movie

Lovers on the Road

The film is going to be screened at the Indie Hong

Kong Film Festival in town. A Q & A with its director will follow.

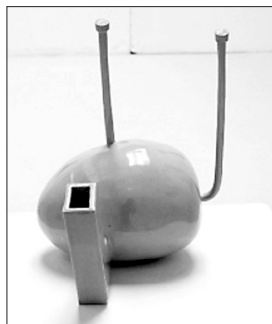
Where: Fanhall Cinema, Xiaobao Artist Village, Tongzhou District

When: 2 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6959 8179

Noviembre

Where: Instituto Cervantes in Beijing, A1 Gongti Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5879 9666



7

Sunday, December 28

Exhibition Chinese Freedom – Shi Jinsong Solo Exhibition

Where: T Space, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until February 15, daily except Monday, 10:30 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8456 1529

Movie

The Lovers on the Bridge

Where: Sculpting in Time, 37 Xueyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: 2-4:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8231 0662

Return to Hong Kong

The documentary, directed by Li Mengxi, is going to be

screened at the Indie Hong Kong Film Festival in town. A Q & A with the director will follow the film showing.

Where: Fanhall Cinema, Xiaobao Artist Village, Tongzhou District
When: 4 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6959 8179

Nightlife

Fiesta Latina

Buy a drink and get one free all night – on top of a free drink that goes with the entrance fee.

Where: Vics (inside the north gate of the Workers Stadium), Chaoyang District
When: 9 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 5293 0333

Stage in January

Concert

Radetsky March

Who: China Film Symphony Orchestra
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Butterfly Lovers and the Yellow River

Who: Chai Liang, Tan Xiaotang and the China Film Symphony Orchestra
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 2, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Spirited Away

Who: Hayao Miyazaki and Joe Hisaishi

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-880 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Lang Lang New Year Piano Recital

Who: Lang Lang
Where: National Indoor Stadium (inside the Olympic Park), Beichen Dong Lu, Chaoyang District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 190-2,009 yuan
Tel: 6417 0058

New Year Orchestral Concert

Who: Conducted by Earnest Martinezz-Izquierdo
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-1,080 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Concert of Traditional Chinese Music Classics

Who: Orchestral Music Group of the China Opera and Dance-Drama Theater

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Dance

Swan Lake

Who: Hong Kong Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Beauty and the Beast

Who: Birmingham Royal Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 13-15, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,080 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Romeo and Juliet

Who: Birmingham Royal Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 17-18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,080 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Cinderella

Who: Israel Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 28-29, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-880 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

Journey to the West

Who: Guangzhou Acrobatic Troupe, China Oriental Song and Dance Troupe, Songshan Shaolin Martial Arts Troupe and Guangdong Dance School
Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District
When: January 14-31, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-880 yuan
Tel: 6835 4455

(By Li Jing)

A Kiss can be dangerous

By Han Manman

Kissing is a great way to connect with your partner, a physical act that defines love. There are many benefits from kissing, like emotional bonding, stress reduction and foreplay, but the practice carries a risk of spreading bacteria and viruses.

However, that is no reason to play bashful. If kissing is done in an appropriate manner then it can provide excellent satisfaction to both the partners without any danger.

Example one: mononucleosis

Case: Mononucleosis is also known as "Mono" or the "kissing disease." Many Chinese heard of this disease after basketball star Sun Yue contracted it.

Sun, 22, signed with Los Angeles Lakers shortly after the Beijing Olympics. However, he was sidelined indefinitely as a result of testing positive for mononucleosis. He missed most of training camp, which put his career in a slump.

Doctor Analysis: Doctor Hu from Beijing Friendship Hospital said Mononucleosis is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. It is not spread as easily as some other viruses, such as the common cold. The mono virus is found in saliva and mucus. One common way to catch mono is by kissing someone who has been infected.

Mononucleosis can be transferred through other types of direct contact with saliva, such as by sharing a straw or an eating utensil.

Signs of mono usually develop four to six weeks after a person has been

exposed to the virus. Mono is most common among people 15 to 35 years old because this age bracket is most active in kissing more than one partner.

Signs of mono include fever, sore throat, headaches, white patches on the back of the throat, swollen glands in the neck, fatigue and loss of appetite.

Avoid kissing or sharing utensils if you or someone close has mono, Hu said.

Example two: shattered eardrums

Case: A young woman from Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, partially lost her hearing after her boyfriend ruptured her eardrum during an excessively passionate kiss at the beginning of this month.

The unfortunate "kiss" was examined at the hospital, and physicians said her hearing will gradually return to normal, though it could take two months. For now, she is deaf in her left ear.

Doctor Analysis: Doctor Li from Zhuhai Second People's Hospital said the inner ear is connected to the

mouth through a tube, whose chief function is to equalize pressure.

"In this case, the kiss reduced the pressure in the mouth, pulled the eardrum out and caused a breakdown of the ear," Li said. "A strong kiss may cause an imbalance in air pressure between the two inner ears and lead to a broken ear drum."

Li said while kissing each other is normally very safe, he advise kissers to exercise caution.

Example three: kiss of death

Case: A 15-year-old girl from Canada, Christina Desforjes, died after kissing her boyfriend. He had eaten a peanut butter sandwich nine hours earlier and she was allergic to peanuts.

Doctor Analysis: Pediatric allergist Karen Sigman said if peanuts remain on the tongue or the lips, they can cause a reaction in those susceptible.

Sigman said people with allergies have to let their friends know. Dating someone with allergies means being educated and avoiding coming into contact with their trigger substances.

Prevention tips

There is no need to give up kissing for the sake of health. While disease-causing bugs can be transferred during a kiss, and the risk of serious infection is very small.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce the risk of passing on, or catching, an infection while kissing:

- 1 Avoid kissing when you or the other person is sick.
- 2 Avoid kissing anyone on the lips when you, or they, have an active cold sore, warts or ulcers around the lips or in the mouth.
- 3 Maintain good oral hygiene.
- 4 Cough and sneeze into a hanky if you have a cold.
- 5 See your doctor about immunizations. Vaccines are available to prevent some diseases such as chickenpox, hepatitis B and group C meningococcal infection.

Viruses passed in a kiss

Examples of illnesses caused by viruses that can be transmitted during kissing include:

1 Colds – also known as upper respiratory tract infections. Many different viruses can cause the common cold. Colds are thought to be spread by direct contact with the virus. You could catch a cold from airborne droplets or from direct contact with the secretions of an infected person's nose and throat.

2 Glandular fever – it is the common term for a viral infection called infectious mononucleosis, caused by the Epstein-Barr virus. The virus is spread through saliva and infection occurs on contact.

3 Herpes infection – viruses that are considered part of the herpes family include Epstein-Barr, chickenpox and herpes simplex. Herpes simplex can be spread through direct contact with the virus when kissing. It is most easily spread to others when blisters are forming or have erupted. The virus can be spread from the site of the blisters even after they heal. Chickenpox is easily spread from person to person by direct contact or airborne droplets.

4 Hepatitis B – kissing may also transmit this virus, although blood has higher levels of this virus than saliva. Infection can occur when infected blood and saliva come into direct contact with another's bloodstream or mucous membranes. A person is more likely to be infected when kissing if they have open sores in or around the mouth.

5 Warts – oral warts can be spread through kissing, especially if there are areas of recent trauma.

6 Meningitis – open-mouth, or "French" kissing, with multiple partners almost quadruples risk of getting a fatal brain infection. Kissing with tongues enables potentially deadly meningococcal bacteria to pass between partners.



CFP Photo

The Great White Wall

By Jin Zhu

The Great Wall looks majestic in winter, covered in snow. It is not as crowded as in other seasons, and draws many photographers and climbers eager to behold the structure coated in white powder.

Beijing Today presents some of the best sections of the Wall for enjoying the "snowscape." Some portions of the hike can be hazardous, so visitors should consult tour guides, residents around the Wall or veteran climbers.

For history lovers Mutianyu Great Wall

The Mutianyu Wall is located in Huairou Country, about 79 kilometers from downtown. It connects Juyongguan Pass in the west and Gubeikou Great Wall in the east.

Since this section served as a military outpost in ancient times, both its inner and outer sides have saw-tooth shaped parapets different from the more common rectangular ones. It has 22 watchtowers distributed at close intervals along the wall.

Zhang Yifeng, a shutterbug from Beijing, considers these watchtowers "the best spots for enjoying the snowscape."

"The scenery at the Mutianyu Great Wall in winter is less colorful than in spring or autumn. However, the imposing military constructions when covered in snow make the Wall appear more magnificent," Zhang said.

"Seeing everything covered in snow, visitors cannot help but imagine the Wall as it appeared in the past centuries," he said.

The pines around the Mutianyu Wall are also popular with visitors. According to the park administration, more than 20 of its pines are over three centuries old, and about 200 are more than 100 years old.

"After an annual heavy snowfall, the pine trees are covered with ice crystals, which visitors come specifically to see," a park staff member said.

Getting there: Take Bus 916 or 936 at Dongzhimen Gate to Huairou Longshan Hotel, then take a mini bus to Mutianyu Great Wall.
Tel: 6162 6022
Admission: 40 yuan



For experienced climbers Jiankou Great Wall

The Great Wall at Jiankou, or Arrow Lock, is located in Huairou County, 73 kilometers from downtown Beijing. It connects with the Mutianyu Great Wall to the east and Huanhuacheng Great Wall to the west.

Major sections of the wall, which is built along a mountain ridge with steep cliffs on each side, are in need of repair; it is considered one of the most dangerous but attractive sections of the Wall.

"The best places to enjoy the snowscape in Jiankou are the steepest spots and the high cliffs, such as Sky Stairs, Nine-eye Tower and 'Flying Eagle Flies Facing Upward,'" Zhou, the photographer, said.

"Take the 'Flying Eagle Flies Facing Upward' as an example: it is an extremely high watchtower built at the highest point of the wall. It

got its name from a saying that if an eagle desires to sit atop it, it can only do so by flying vertically," Zhou said.

The Jiankou Great Wall is built of large white hill rocks, which makes it very prominent from a distance. The use of white rocks in its construction, on top of its natural beauty, makes the Jiankou Wall extra special.

"When heavy snow covers the watchtowers, which are built of white rocks, the white elements magnify each other. Such a scene on the Great Wall cannot be seen at any other season but winter," Zhou said.

Getting there: Take Bus 6 from Xuanwumen, Qianmen and Dongsitiao to Huairou Country, and then change to a local bus that travels to the wall.
Tel: 6964 6250
Admission: 10 yuan



Photographers' favorite place Jinshanling Great Wall

Located at the juncture of Miyun County and Hebei Province's Luanping County, it is about 140 kilometers from downtown.

Viewed from a distance, the Jinshanling Wall resembles a giant dragon as the Wall follows the curve of mountain peaks. Parts of this section remain in ruin. It is therefore considered as having a more natural ambience than other sections of the Wall that have been completely rebuilt.

"The wall retains its original Ming Dynasty look and vividly reflects the characteristics of that era. That is the kind of feeling evoked by photographs taken in Jinshanling," Zhou Wanping, a photographer who lives at the foot of the Wall, said.

"Standing in the Wangjinglou, at the peak of Jinshanling, visitors can see a snowscape. Especially in the winter, when visitors are far less frequent and everything is covered in heavy snow, the scene gives a feeling of isolation that seems to connect them with the wall's defenders in ancient times," Zhou said.

Getting there: Take Tour Bus 12 from Xuanwumen or Dongsitiao directly to the Jinshanling Great Wall.
Tel: 8402 4628
Admission: 30 yuan

CNP Photo

The glory of ancient Changsha

By He Jianwei

The Changsha Fire of 1938, also known as the Wenxi Fire, the country's worst man-made fire in an urban area, almost destroyed Changsha. The blaze spared only a little of the architecture of Taiping Jie, an ancient commercial street. But at the end of last year, the municipal government completed its 130-million yuan renovation of Taiping Jie and restored the street to its former glory.

Getting there:
Take Bus 6, 12, 109, 145, 312, 314 or the Peng Lishan Line and get off at Taiping Jie Exit 1.



Prosperity in history

Located near the east side of the Xiang River in Changsha's Tianxin District, Taiping Jie used to be a hangout of talented people and gave rise to a prosperous market. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the government built a gate called Taiping Gate on the north end of the street, a name that the street adopted.

Changsha's earliest inhabitants arrived 7,000 years ago and it has a recorded history of more than 3,000 years. In the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods (770-221 BC), it was an important economic, cultural and military town of the southern state of Chu.

In 221 BC, Emperor Qin Shihuang unified China and made Changsha one of the kingdom's 36 towns. In the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), it

became the capital of Changsha State. It was integrated into Hunan Province in the Qing Dynasty and was renamed the provincial capital in 1922.

Taiping Jie has witnessed the changing of dynasties. Since Changsha became a town more than 2,000 years ago, the street has been its center. In the Warring States Period, a Chinese scholar and minister to the Chu State's king, Qu Yuan, lived on the street whenever he came to Changsha. Qu's death is commemorated on the Dragon Boat Festival.

Taiping Jie has kept the ancient period alive not only through its architecture but also its snacks. Many old and famous shops line the street, like those selling tea, salt, and fireworks and nails — a clear reflection of Hunan's history and culture.



A sculpture named after the local ballad Yuejiang Baba

Bringing ancient times back

The municipal government finished the first phase of Taiping Jie's renovation in one year, at the end of 2007. The project involved retrofitting the facade of the main street, upgrading its facilities and fixing the network of underground pipes.

The street's granite surface was restored, along with the black tiled and high-pitched roofs, a style typical of late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic. Wooden windows also contribute to bringing the ancient feel back to the street.

To preserve Taiping Jie's history and culture, the authorities limited the nature of businesses that could be set up, only allowing those that dealt in calligraphy and related arts, local specialty products, cultural entertainment and time-honored brands.

The restrictions, however, killed business on the street. To revitalize it, Taiping Jie is looking to the models provided by Lijiang's Square

Street in Yunnan Province and Yangshuo's West Street in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. These places integrate traditional buildings and modern establishments — a co-existence of history and the present world, as well as the interaction between culture and the market economy.

Pubs like Friends and 212 are among the most popular places on Taiping Jie. Others are those that feature old and famous brands. The municipal government has restored several of these brands, like Lao Tong Yi Paint Shop, Qian Yi Sheng Grain Supply Shop and De Sheng Salt Shop.

North to the Former Residence of Jia Yi, an ancient theater platform has been restored. The platform, which is about two stories high, was a famous Peking Opera stage in the Qing Dynasty.

Taiping Jie has fewer visitors than in the past, so it is a good place to find some peace and quiet in Changsha's busy downtown.

Former residence of Jiayi

As one of the city's oldest relics, the Former Residence of Jia Yi has the longest history among the former residences of Chinese celebrities, and is located on Taifu Lane in the middle of Taiping Jie.

Jia Yi (200-168 BC) was a famous statesman and writer in ancient China's Han Dynasty, and was once a counselor to Emperor Han Wen. But because Jia offended the dignitaries, he was demoted to tutor to the King of Changsha, a place he disliked because he feared its humid climate would lead to an early death.

Jia spent three lonely years in Changsha, where he composed excellent pieces of writing that earned him the label "Jia Changsha." Jia and the scholar Qu Yuan are often mentioned in the same breath and are jointly called "Qu Jia." Both were intelligent individuals but encountered a lot of adversities, and both were banished to Changsha. When he once passed the Xing River, Jia wrote several poems lamenting his fate and comparing himself with Qu.

In the last 2,000 years, Jia's former residence has been ruined and rebuilt

numerous times. The place now consists of the Jia Taifu Memorial Temple, Taifu Hall, Xunqiu Thatched House, Ancient Stele Pavilion, Wall Inscriptions and Changhuai Well, the only well-preserved site in the compound.

Visitors to the residence always linger in front of a famous couplet facing the well, a homage to the great writer. The couplet reads: Only the old well knows the shifting of life as time passes; what is constant is the endless love of Changsha's people for Jia Yi.

Admission: 18 yuan
Tel: 0731-5155 379



Peking Opera Stage

Greetings from Hotels



Crowne Plaza Beijing

The Crowne Plaza is ready to celebrate Christmas and ring in the New Year.

With the Beijing Olympics, the city experienced a year of challenges, excitements and achievements. But 2009 brings change, and with it the need to prepare for harder times. Nevertheless, to create a great hotel guests love and become the place to meet at Wangfujing, the Crowne's team is providing a great guest experience and is ready to face the challenges ahead. The Crowne looks forward to welcoming many at the Crowne Plaza Beijing, and wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy and Successful 2009.

Where: 48 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 5911 9999



The Regent Beijing & Park Plaza Beijing Wangfujing

We are delighted and honored to extend our warmest and most sincere wishes to you for a Very Merry Christmas. As we turn the page on an exciting year of success and accomplishments, we open our hearts and fill our minds with the promises of a new year and the hope you will find happiness, health, prosperity and the strength to fight adversity.

Where: 97 / 99 Jianbao Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 8522 1888 or 1999



Hilton Beijing Wangfujing

At Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, we are keen to get underway with our first Christmas celebrations. Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, distinguished by its fine dining approach, offers the warmth of true Chinese hospitality. The Hilton is honored to welcome you with the highest levels of personal service and the finest cuisine. In the spirit of its unique approach to individuality and personalization, we wish you an unforgettable Christmas and a wonderful New Year ahead.

Where: 8 Wangfujing Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 5812 8888



Sofitel Wanda Beijing

We at Sofitel Wanda Beijing extend to all our heartfelt wishes. We are delighted to welcome you to celebrate a memorable festive season, during which we are hosting a range of events guaranteed to make you merry.

2008 is coming to an end, and we want to thank you for your continued patronage and loyal support to the Sofitel Wanda Beijing and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Where: 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 8599 6666



Renaissance Beijing Hotel

Renaissance Beijing Hotel is an elegant, international hotel. Its signature atmosphere is a fusion of the East and West. Our hospitality will create a most memorable experience.

In this festive season we would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your continuous support and wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Where: 36 Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6468 9999



Traders Hotel Beijing

2009 is around the corner, and Traders Hotel Beijing is celebrating its 20th anniversary. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for all the support and patronage rendered by our guests.

As the festive season approaches, we would like to extend our warmest greetings and wish all of you and your family a healthier and very prosperous 2009.

Where: 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6505 2277



Courtyard by Marriott Beijing Northeast

Happy Holidays from the newly opened Courtyard by Marriott Beijing Northeast. We are proud to present our new look and design as the latest addition to the dynamic and vibrant capital. This festive season we extend our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Where: 101 Jingshun Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 5907 6666



北京万豪酒店

Beijing Marriott Hotel City Wall

Seasons greetings to all *Beijing Today* readers. We trust this note finds you in great health. Christmas is the time to reunite with loved ones and friends to enjoy the spirit of giving. It is an occasion to indulge in good food and great activities.

Come visit any of our newly opened 1,312 rooms at Beijing Marriott Hotel City Wall this holiday. We look forward to sharing a White Christmas with you and your family.

Where: 7 Jianguomen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 58118888



北京国际俱乐部饭店

The St. Regis Beijing

Throughout the month of December, whether it is a party for two or for two-hundred – we have the perfect solution for you to celebrate in style: activities to get you into the spirit of the festive season, the highlights of which include the party in our Great Hall Ballroom on Christmas Eve.

We hope you choose The St. Regis Beijing to celebrate the holidays and wish you a happy festive season and a successful 2009.

Where: 21 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6460 6688



Beijing, Haidian

北京海淀永泰
福朋酒店
喜来登集团管理



Four Points by Sheraton Beijing, Haidian & Aloft Beijing, Haidian

This is a season worthy of appreciation and celebration. We sincerely thank you for your support since the opening of our hotels. At Christmas and New Year, we have some little indulgences exclusively for you. Come and join our celebration, which is guaranteed to spark your spirit.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Where: 25 Yuanda Lu, Haidian District
Tel: 8889 8888 / 8000

Dining

New Year's Eve retro party

Get into Yellowstone's time machine and dance to beats from the '70s and the '80s for at this retro party. Put on your best retro outfit and come show your dancing skills to songs performed by the resident band, The Jamm and D.J.

Where: Crowne Plaza Park View Wuzhou Beijing, 8 Beisihuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 31

Cost: 418 yuan net per person (includes sumptuous buffet dinner and two glasses sparkling Prosecco); 1,188 yuan net per couple (includes sumptuous buffet dinner, four glasses sparkling Prosecco and one night stay in a superior room with breakfast)

Tel: 6481 7000

Sparkling New Year's Eve

Put the twinkle in your eye with a sumptuous seafood buffet and roving live entertainment. Live music to delight from the sound forge band in Senses and Prego restaurants. The resident DJ Vitas leads the 2009 countdown party in Plush lobby lounge with funky tunes and beats!

Where: The Westin Beijing Financial Street, 9b Jinrong Jie, Xicheng District

When: December 31, 6:30-11:30pm (dinner), 11:30 pm – 1:30 am (countdown party)

Cost: 428 yuan net (adults), 228 yuan (kid 12 and under)

Tel: 6606 8866

Aviation

Fly to London or Europe and get a companion ticket for free

British Airways announced a special offer for its premium class passengers flying from Beijing or Shanghai. Passengers who purchase a First class or Club World business class return ticket to London or Europe can enjoy a free companion ticket.

The preferential fare for two return Club World tickets starts at 53,550 yuan and two First Class return tickets start at 78,750 yuan. The offer is valid for departure from Beijing or Shanghai before April 30.

Tel: 5879 7544 or 021 6375 8385

Singapore Airlines to fly to Kuwait, increase frequency to Abu Dhabi and Cairo

Singapore Airlines will begin four-times-a-week service to Kuwait from March 15. Flying via Abu Dhabi, the service will operate on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, using a Boeing 777-200 aircraft.

As a consequence of the introduction of this service, Singapore Airlines will now fly between Singapore and Abu Dhabi daily, up from the existing three times-weekly service.

From March 12, Singapore Airlines will increase flights between Singapore and Cairo from three times a week to four. All flights will operate via Dubai.

Hotel

2-night package services

Swissotel Beijing will provide a series of extra services for two-night guests. This special package includes half-day shopping concierge service, complimentary aroma oil massage, private limousine service to airport, a daily breakfast buffet for two, complimentary upgrade to junior suite, executive club benefits and late check-out until 4 pm.

Room reservations and extra services are subject to availability and all above rates are subject to 15 percent service charge.

Where: Swissotel Beijing Hong Kong Macau Center, 2 Chaoyangmen Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: before January 31

Tel: 6553 2288

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Gan Tian at gantian@ynet.com.

Money can buy the devil himself

By Venus Lee

Last week, I bumped into Yang Shuai, a classmate's younger brother, at a shopping mall. He said "Hello," but I almost did not recognize him because he looked so different from when I last saw him at my university graduation five years ago.

He offered me a lift when he saw the huge shopping bags I was carrying. During the drive home, he told me some astonishing real-life stories, and made a few jaw-dropping comments.

He said he did not attend senior high school and instead bummed around for three years. Then, his family bribed the head of the local department of education so he could take the college entrance exams. Although he failed to get the minimum score to qualify for college, his family's power and influence secured him a place at a local college of finance.

He spent his college days playing computer games, drinking, smoking, driving around town and party-hopping. When he did make it to class, he would often fall asleep. But he never worried about grades or the possibility of not graduating.

I was shocked when he said his teachers would answer exam questions for him and even complete his term papers. He said his father greased the palms of the college president, so he got a degree worry-free and effort-free.

After graduation, he opened a store that sold spare parts and accessories for luxury vehicles. He himself already had four of these cars: an Audi A8, BMW 740, Toyota Crown 3.0 and Mercedes-Benz 600. He was content with his life, but his father wanted him to get an MBA in the US to boost the family's reputation, and to prepare him to take over their real

estate business.

To get into an MBA school, he needs to pass the TOFEL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), but said the review classes were giving him a headache. He was thinking of hiring someone to take the exam for him, he said.

As if a bulb suddenly lit inside his head, he turned toward me and asked whether I could take the TOFEL for him. "Can you do it for me? Name your price. I'm not pushing you for an answer now. But think about it, buddy," he said.

"What an idiot!" I thought, but did not say the words out loud. Because he comes from a rich family, he thinks he can buy everyone?

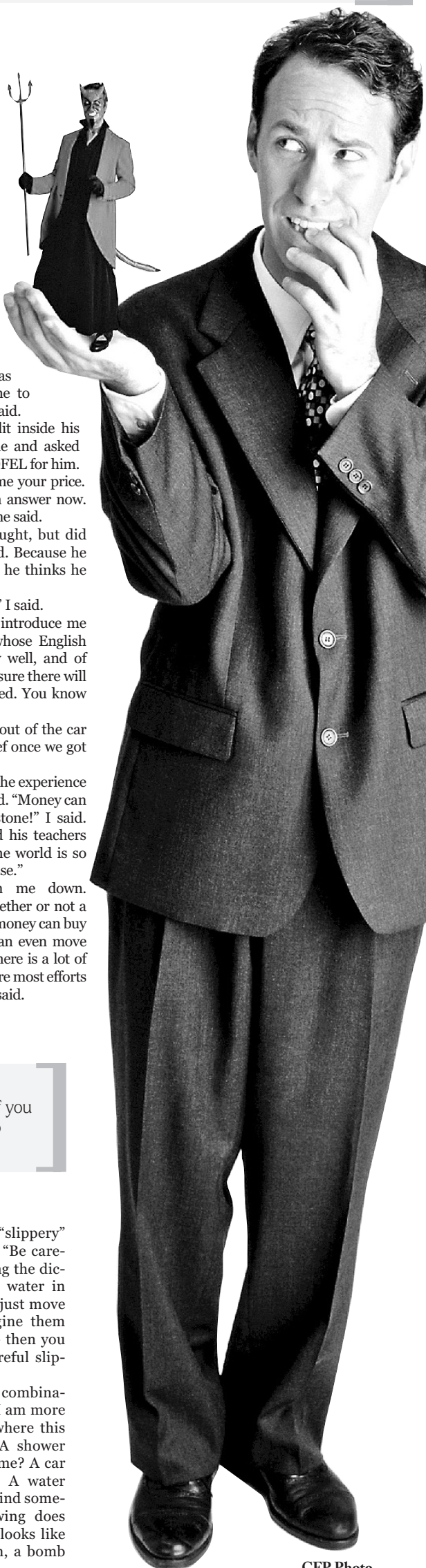
"Sorry, but I can't help," I said.

"Well, can you at least introduce me to friends or classmates whose English is good? I'm going to pay well, and of course, you'll get a cut. I'm sure there will be loads of people interested. You know how money talks," he said.

I could not wait to get out of the car and breathed a sigh of relief once we got to my place.

That evening, I related the experience to Jeffrey, a Canadian friend. "Money can make a ghost turn a millstone!" I said. "The college president and his teachers are all slaves of money. The world is so unfair! Effort makes no sense."

Jeffrey tried to calm me down. "Although I don't know whether or not a ghost can turn a millstone, money can buy the devil himself. Money can even move the gods sometimes. Yes, there is a lot of unfairness in life, but I'm sure most efforts still do not go to waste," he said.



CFP Photo

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please take a picture and send it to gantian@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Let your head knocked



By Tiffany Tan

The first line, which means to say "Watch your head," comes out like an order to hurt yourself. And hurt yourself not just anywhere, but "here." The command does take on a softer tone because "here" is enclosed in parentheses, which you can imagine as being said in a whisper.

The second line has a problem with spelling, with word order and

bad hearing. "Sligippy" is "slippery" misspelled. "Becare for" is "Be careful," but whoever was taking the dictation probably had some water in his or her ears. And if you just move the words around – imagine them printed on mahjong tiles – then you will come up with, "Be careful slippery floor ahead."

I have never seen such a combination of warning signs that I am more interested in finding out where this could have been posted. A shower room with a small doorframe? A car wash with a low ceiling? A water refilling station located behind someone's staircase? The drawing does not provide much help: It looks like a combination of a balloon, a bomb and a necklace.

Blacklist

Beijing Today has come up with Blacklist, a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then this page is your new best friend. Watch out for it each week.

Local professor: Shida Zhu

1. The tycoon suspected violations of labor draws concerns.

The structure and intended meaning of this sentence is in total chaos. First, when "suspected" is used in an attributive clause, it has to be followed by the word "of." Hence, the sentence should be, "The tycoon suspected of violations ..." The second pitfall of this sentence is that "labor" cannot be violated. A person can only violate labor laws, correct? So the way to fix this sentence is to say, The tycoon suspected of violations of labor laws draws concerns.

2. The vice minister of the ministry of information

In my experience, beginners usually commit this kind of error. It is a bit ridiculous to say "the minister of the ministry of information." When the "minister" or "vice minister" of a certain ministry is identified, it is not necessary to repeat the word "ministry." Therefore, it should be, "the vice minister of information," "the minister of foreign affairs" and so on.

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. The tycoon suspected violations of labor draws concerns.

It takes a lot of scrutiny before the sentence begins to shed its mystery, and yet, it still will not give away its deepest secret: Is the writer putting emphasis on the tycoon or the violation? If it is the former, in addition to Professor Zhu's suggestion, it can also be rewritten this way: The tycoon, who is suspected of violating labor laws, draws concerns. Note that "laws" needs to be added to labor, in accordance to the professor's explanation. If the sentence's emphasis however is on the violations, then the correct way to say it is, The tycoon is suspected of violating labor laws, which has drawn concerns.

2. The vice minister of the ministry of information

Professor Zhu hit the nail right on the head: This sentence has a problem of redundancy. The title "vice minister" implies that the person holds a position within a ministry, so there is no more need to say "ministry" when identifying the post. In the same vein, countries that use "departments" and "secretaries" would say, "the Secretary of Defense," when referring to the head of the Department of Defense.

Movie of the week

Ghost Town, the dream project of Dean Teaster and DJ Perry, is a "Western" set in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. It chronicles a true story of love, hatred, revenge and family honor. The film is based on the Ghost Town in the Sky theme park located in Maggie Valley, North Carolina.

Synopsis

According to Appalachian folklore, in 1856 a man emerged from the mountain wilderness around Cold Springs, North Carolina to avenge his father's death. His vengeance was so powerful that by the time he was finished, nothing was left but a ghost town. Twenty years later, when his daughter's honor is brought into question, the mysterious avenger returns to ensure that justice is served.



Ghost Town (2008)

**Scene 1**

(Harmon Teaster asks his father – the Sheriff – to free Victor, who killed an Indian. Victor's father, John Burnett, is coming with a gang of boys.)

Harmon Teaster (H): Pa! John Burnett's riding in with his boys. They're coming this way.

Victor (V1): I told you Pa would come for me.

Sheriff (S): Your pa can come say anything he wants, boy, but you're still gonna stand trial for killing that Injun.

V1: Injun (1)! Boy. Ain't no sense about them Cherokee (2).

H: Pa ... I don't think he's coming here to talk. Why don't you just let him go?

S: Do you think that's right, Harmon? Just turn him loose (3)?

V1: Boy makes a lot of sense there, Sheriff.

S: Shut your mouth, Victor! You ought to listen. I said shut up! (Turns to Harmon) I ask you again, do you think that's the right thing to do? Just set him free?

John Burnett (J): Ransom, you got my son.

S: Your son killed an Injun boy in cold blood (4). I saw him with my own two eyes.

J: That wasn't no a boy. That was a savage.

S: Doesn't matter. He's standing trial for what he did.

J: My son got some growin' up to do, but I can't have him gettin' in all this trouble over some thieving redskin. Now you tell me how we can work this out (5).

S: Mr. Burnett, just back yourself out of here. I'm sending for the judge tomorrow morning.

J: (Pushing Sheriff down and taking out his gun) You ignorant ass! I tried to be civil, and you went and got all righteous on me.

Scene 2

(Violet comes to ask Doctor Morrison for some medicine for her father.)

Doctor Morrison (M): Where's your father at?

Victor (V2): Back over towards Cold ... mountains over. He was too sick to travel, so I thought maybe you can give me a tonic that I could take to him.

M: We can try something. But if I can't see him, it's hard to know what will help him.

V2: Anything you can do will be much appreciated (6). I can pay. Not much, but some.

M: We'll work that out. I'm sure I have something. I haven't seen you around here before, have I?

V2: No.

M: I don't blame you. This used to be a family town. Now, it's gotten worse and worse. I used to see more kids like that with fractured (7) arms, climbing trees. Now I'm doing mostly gunshot wounds.

V2: I didn't see too many women and children when I came into town.

M: They're hiding. The sheriff has no control over what goes on here. Drunks are running around on the street all day and all night. If you're traveling by yourself, you better be careful.

V2: I will.

M: Um ... I'm gonna wrap this up. Do you want some ... Freshen up (8)? Or, uh, can I make you something to eat?

V2: Or ... I'll take you up on the freshen. Thank you.

Scene 3

(The Sheriff, in his office, wants to know what happened after Victor Burnett caught Violet illegally.)

Sheriff (S): Victor! Hold on, fellas. You mind telling me what's going on out here?

V1: A bit of family business.

S: Victor. Now you got to understand. It does not look good for people to be dragged off the streets of this town in the middle of broad daylight like that.

V1: And it's bad for politicians to be messing with (9) other folks' business.

Sheriff's fellow: There are still laws in this town, Mr. Burnett. Let's all just take it easy. Mr. Burnett, sir, what right do you have to take that girl?

V1: What right?

Victor's fellow (pulling out a gun and pointing it at Sheriff's head): You're trying to create a job vacancy (10) real fast. Digger would be happy to box you and your amigo (11) up, if that's what you want.

V1: That girl's pa murdered my family. In my book, that gives me every right. And if any of you even question my actions again, or get between me and my business, I'll bury you! You understand?

S: All right, now, Victor ...

V1: Get the hell out of here.

S: W-We're stepping away. Stepping away right now.

Scene 4

(Will Burnett releases Violet secretly, but his father comes down hard on him after he found it.)

V1: So you're still here. You didn't run off with that little whore (12). You should have! You're a disgrace to me. Weak bastardly (13) seed. You're too soft! I've given you everything but the stern hand you really needed. And you have no respect for the way of things – a legacy that was born of blood in this town before you were born.

Will (W): I love her, Pa, and Ma would have loved her, too.

V1: She cried and she cried, but she would not tell us where her pa was. Yeah ... not even when we cut her.

W: What? What kind of sick man are you?

V1: Same as my son, boy.

(Will gives his father a punch on the face.)

V1: Whoo! There might be hope for you yet, but you got a lot to learn. And the first is who runs this town. That man is me. Boys, don't kill him, but teach him what happens when someone betrays (14) us. Better take him outside.

**Vocabulary**

- Injun:** offensive term for Native Americans
- Cherokee:** a member of an Iroquoian people formerly living in the Appalachian Mountains but now chiefly in Oklahoma.
- turn someone loose:** grant freedom to someone
- in cold blood:** in a cold unemotional manner
- work something out:** resolve something
- appreciate:** giving pleasure or satisfaction
- fractured:** breaking of hard tissue such as bone
- freshen up:** make brighter and prettier
- be messing with:** interrupting or disturbing
- vacancy:** an empty area or space
- amigo:** Spanish for a friend or comrade
- whore:** a woman who engages in sexual intercourse for money
- bastardly:** of no value or worth
- betray:** deliver to an enemy by treachery

(By Venus Lee)

